

Play It Safe When Using Space Heaters in NIH Buildings

(continued)

Prior to purchasing the heater, be sure that the unit has been tested by an approved testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL) and is equipped with ALL of the following features to minimize fire hazards typically associated with these devices:

- A multi-directional tip-over switch - space heaters can easily tip over. This switch automatically turns off the unit regardless of which way it may fall.
- An overheat sensor - this sensor limits the heat output of the space heater and automatically turns off the unit if it becomes too hot.
- A visible on/off indicator switch and light.
- A heater that is cool to the touch and that has guards over the heat coils.

Proper placement of the space heater is important for safety as well as for comfort. Make sure the unit is placed on a level floor on a hard, non-combustible surface instead of carpet.

All combustible materials (e.g., paper, plastics, wood, etc.) must be stored at least three feet away from the heater.

The power cord must not be covered by carpeting or other materials and extension cords should not be used. Electrical current used for space heaters can cause extension cords to overheat and potentially cause a fire. Plug the space heater directly into a properly grounded outlet.

Never leave the heater in operation when an area is unattended/unoccupied.

If you have questions concerning the selection and use of space heaters, please contact the Division of the Fire Marshal, Office of Research Services at 301-496-0487.

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