

Space Heaters

October 2012

FROM: The Offices of Facilities Operations, Safety and Security, Environmental Health and Safety, and Purchasing and Auxiliary Services (Risk Management)

TO: ALL OBERLIN COLLEGE EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: SPACE HEATERS

This correspondence is to inform all employees that the use of space heaters in campus buildings is prohibited unless the heating units are authorized by Facilities Operations. Oberlin College's property and liability insurance carrier, severely restricts and in most cases prohibits their use.

We ask if you are currently using a portable space heater, that you discontinue the use of it immediately. Contact Facilities Operations (58445) to discuss your heating needs and the particular space heater you have.

Following this notice, because of fire, safety, and/or environmental reasons any space heater found on campus may be confiscated by authorized personnel.

The Department of Facilities Operations may permit the use of approved portable electric space heaters on a case-by-case basis. This will require a department representative review the location where the heater is to be used and concur with the need for its use in order to help meet reasonable individual comfort needs. Facilities Operations will first attempt to rectify any heating problems by correcting/improving the insufficient mechanical systems involved.

Facilities Operations personnel have full authorization to eliminate the use of any portable electric unit. If it is determined that a space heater is temporarily needed for a work area, Facility Operations must approve the heater for purchase and it must comply with the following criteria.

1. Units must be UL (Underwriters Laboratory) or FM (Factory Mutual) rated and equipped with safety features such as auto-cut off switches, element guards, and on/off indicator lights.
2. A closed oil-filled radiant type heater with low surface temperature. Exposed, resistance heating elements are prohibited.
3. Of a restricted wattage to prevent overloading of branch electrical circuits in the area.
4. Be tagged and identified by Facilities Operations before being placed in an area for use.
5. Outfitted, if required, UL or FM approved with tag/markings visible, be of the proper gauge and equipped with a ground and surge protection. Properly used according to manufacturer guide lines.

Please review this Facilities Operations site for more detailed information on safe and appropriate use of portable space heaters.

1. Units must be plugged directly into a fixed outlet equipped with a ground fault circuit interrupter (or GFCI) if available. The use of extension cords are permitted only if approved by Facilities Operations.
2. If the electric portable space heater "trips" a breaker/fuse, it will need to be checked by a college electrician or maintenance technician before being put back in use.
3. Units should not be used within 3-feet of combustible materials. Units must be placed on the floor and never located on furniture, window seals, etc. where the unit may fall and cause possible damage to the heater components.
4. Do not hide cords under rugs or carpet as this may cause the cord to overheat.
5. Never leave an electric portable space heater turned on that is unattended. Always turn off (preferably unplug) portable electric space heaters before leaving the room.
6. Users must strictly adhere to all manufacturers' instructions for proper and safe use along with following required operational or preventative maintenance guidelines. Users must read fully and become familiar with the manufacturer's instruction booklet and have it available for review by Facilities Operations.
7. Both the heater's plug and cord, and the extension cord (if used) should be regularly inspected for damage or excessive wear.
8. Never attempt to replace parts or repair an electric space heater. Follow the manufacturer's recommended procedure for repairs.
9. Portable electric heaters should not be used in wet or moist places (including bathrooms) unless the type of heater is designed and certified for that purpose.
10. Portable electric space heaters should not be used in areas where young children would have access (supervised or unsupervised) as severe burns, electric shock, or fire ignition may occur if they either come in direct contact with the heater's element—heating coil, plug or cord.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation

Facilities Operation
Safety and Security
Environmental Health and Safety
Purchasing and Auxiliary Services (Risk Management)