

Using Electric Space Heaters at College of DuPage

What You Should Know About Space Heaters:

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 fires every year are associated with the use of space heaters. More than 300 persons die in these fires. An estimated 6,000 persons receive hospital emergency room care for burn injuries associated with contacting hot surfaces of space heaters, mostly in non-fire situations.

While manufacturers have generally had their space heaters tested, usually by Underwriters Laboratory or a similar agency, to minimize the chance of fire resulting from the normal use of the product in the home, College of DuPage has additional requirements because of the nature of the facility. To avoid confusion and improve fire and personal safety, the following uniform guidelines have been developed for the site as a whole, including both office and instructional areas. The use of electric space heaters is permitted, as a **temporary measure**, if the following requirements are met:

Use Requirements:

1. The Facilities Operations and Maintenance Department has been contacted and determined that the HVAC system can not maintain the area at the college's standard temperature.
2. The space heater is kept away from any combustible material. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions.
3. The space heater is always turned off when the area being heated is not occupied.
4. Nothing is ever placed on top of or touching the space heater.
5. The space heater is plugged directly into a wall outlet. Extension cords and or power strips may not be used because of the risk of overheating and possibly catching fire.
6. The space heater is in plain sight.

Space Heater Requirements:

Fully Enclosed Types:

A fully enclosed space heater that by design has no external surfaces that reach temperatures capable of igniting material placed against the surface, such as oil-filled radiant heaters, must meet the following specifications:

1. It must be listed and labeled by a recognized body, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL) or other nationally recognized testing laboratory.
2. If it has any exposed metal parts, it must have a grounded three-pronged plug.
3. It must not take more than 1,500 watts to operate.
4. It must have a thermostat that shuts the unit off when a preset temperature is reached.

Open Grill Types:

A space heater with an open grill with surfaces capable of igniting material placed against it must meet the following specifications in addition to 1 through 4:

5. It must have a fan forcing air through the grill.
6. It must have an instant tip-over shutdown feature. If the space heater is knocked over, the unit must automatically shut off. Thermal overprotection is insufficient because of the time-lag before shut off.

Questions? Call Facilities Operations and Maintenance at ext.4440.