

Portable heater safety in construction

Portable heaters are commonly used during construction activities when permanent heat sources are not available. The most common types of portable heaters use fuel such as kerosene or propane. Electric heaters can also be used but produce less heat and are less effective than heaters that use fuel, which produce higher British thermal units (BTUs). Portable heaters can be very hazardous and proper safety precautions should be taken when they are used.

PORTABLE HEATER HAZARDS

- Fire.
- Carbon monoxide.
- Improper refueling.
- Burns.
- Electrical shock.

SAFETY TIPS FOR PORTABLE HEATERS

- Always read the owner's manual before using the heat source.
- Complete routine preventative maintenance as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Employees working in the vicinity of the heat source should be warned of potential hazards and possible exposure to burns.
- Be sure heaters are in good condition and operating properly. If a heater does not seem to be operating properly, discontinue use immediately.
- Only qualified persons should be allowed to set up and operate the heater.
- Disconnect the heater fuel source prior to making any repairs on it.
- Always use heaters in a well-ventilated area as carbon monoxide could enter occupied spaces.
- If propane tanks are used as fuel, keep propane tanks upright, on a firm, level surface that is at least 6 feet from the heater.
- Maintain clearance to combustible materials by following recommendations from the manufacturer.
- Job site conditions change constantly. Housekeeping should be reviewed routinely for combustible materials that may have been moved near a heater.
- Do not place a heater directly on a plywood or combustible floor of any type. Instead, place it on a 4-foot by 4-foot square of fire-resistant drywall or cement-board.
- Portable fire extinguishers should be readily available in the area where the heater is located.
- Hoses from fuel sources should be protected from physical damage and exposure to extreme heat.
- Hoses should not be run through a non-secured doorway because a closed door will pinch the hose. This will damage the hose, which will make it difficult for gas to flow into the heater. This could also cause a leak in the hose allowing fuel vapors to enter the surrounding space. If a hose is run through a window, put a block on the sill to prevent the window from closing on and pinching the hose.





Portable heater safety in construction

- Never refuel a hot portable heater when fuel port is attached to the device. Always allow it to cool before refueling.
- Never move or reposition a heater that is operating or hot. Shut off the heater and allow it to cool prior to moving to prevent burns.
- Do not leave an operating heater unattended overnight.
- Fuel should be stored in approved containers properly marked identifying the contents and stored away from other heat-producing devices.
- When possible, use and purchase heaters with tip-over safety shut offs is preferred. Older model heaters may not have these devices installed.
- Do not place a fan in front of a heater as the fan could possibly overheat and cause a fire.
- When electric heaters are used or preferred, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) should be used.
- Always complete inspections of electrical cords when they are used to make sure they are in good maintenance. Frayed or damaged cords should never be used.

Portable heaters are a valuable tool when temporary heat is needed on a construction site. Always follow proper safety procedures and the manufacturer's guidelines when used. If additional information or assistance is needed, contact your UFG Risk Control consultant.

UFG Insurance is the marketing name used to refer to United Fire & Casualty Company and its property and casualty subsidiaries and affiliates. The information contained herein was obtained from reliable sources. However, UFG Insurance accepts no legal liability or responsibility for the correctness or completeness of this information and encourages consultation of additional safety information and resources.

This is for informational purposes only and is accurate as of the publication date. It may not reflect subsequent revisions and is intended for use only by UFG Insurance, UFG Insurance agents and their customers, and/or UFG Service Center employees. UFG Insurance does not undertake any obligation to update the information herein between publications.