



FIRE SAFETY ALERT

Special Fire Safety Alert

Winter is here, and some workspaces or offices may be colder than usual. To stay warm, employees may consider using portable electric space heaters.

Please be aware that portable electric space heaters are a leading cause of office fires during the winter months. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), these devices present a major workplace safety hazard.

ESFI notes that fires can occur when space heaters lack proper safety features, are placed too close to combustible materials, or are not properly plugged in. If an organization does not prohibit space heaters outright, it is critical to establish clear safety guidelines for their use.

The safest approach is to prohibit the use of portable electric space heaters in the workplace.

If space heaters are permitted, ESFI recommends the following safety practices:

- Require employees to obtain approval from a supervisor or facilities manager before use
- Ensure the heater is certified by an independent testing laboratory
- Never leave a space heater unattended while in operation
- Unplug the heater at the end of the workday
- Do not use extension cords or power strips, which can overheat and start a fire
- Plug the heater directly into a wall outlet and avoid using the same outlet for other devices
- Keep heaters at least three feet away from flammable materials such as paper, clothing, and rugs
- Keep heaters out of high-traffic areas, including doorways, where they may pose a tripping hazard

Sharing and enforcing these guidelines can help reduce the risk of fire and injury during cold weather conditions.