



**Environmental Health & Safety**  
**Fire and Life Safety & Emergency Preparedness**  
**Guidance Document**

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**Title:** Portable Heating Devices

**Original Date:** March 14, 2000

**Section:** Fire Safety

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**GENERAL:**

The purpose of this document is to define what portable heating devices are and provide guidance for the safe use of such devices here at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHSC-H). It should be noted that Fire and Life Safety & Emergency Preparedness (FLSEP) and Environmental Health & Safety discourage the use of these devices and should be used only as a last resort for temperature control. If temperature discrepancies exist, customers should contact the FIXT line at 713-500-3498 and inform the Energy Team of the temperature problem. All avenues will be explored by the Energy Team to supply the desired room temperature.

Portable space heaters are small, electrical heating units. Heat is generated by running an electric current through high resistance wires called heating elements. Alternate units using a fuel source are specifically prohibited. Regardless of the shape, size or type of electric heating element, virtually all power is converted into heat. The inherent hazard associated with heater use is the elements, which can reach extremely high temperatures. The heaters are operated by adjusting the unit's setting at high or low, or they may come equipped with a thermostat.

**SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all employees, researchers, students, and contractors at the University of Texas Houston Health Science Center.

**Laboratory Spaces:** Portable space heaters are strictly prohibited in laboratory areas or other areas where chemicals or combustible materials are stored.

**Office Areas:** **Portable space heaters used in these areas will require inspection and approval by EH&S prior to use.**

- All heaters must be UL listed.
- All heaters must be equipped with an automatic shut-off device in the event a heater is tipped over or overheats.
- A clear area of three feet in all directions of the heater shall be maintained and in accordance with the clearances shown on the approval agency label.
- Extension cords shall never be used to supply power to the heater.
- Modular furniture electrical systems must be rated to accommodate the additional electrical load supplied to the heater.

**COMPLIANCE:**

Periodic monitoring will be conducted by Environmental Health & Safety to ensure heaters are being used in accordance with the conditions of this policy. After EH&S has inspected and approved a space heater an orange zip tie will be placed on the cord. All heaters that are not in compliance must be taken out of service immediately and replaced. Disciplinary actions concerning the unsafe use of heaters will be followed per the Fire and Life Safety and Emergency Preparedness Manual Section 2.5 (Response to Non-Compliance).