



Safer home heating: UL advises caution when using space heaters

Supplemental heating equipment leading cause of home fires during cold weather

If you plan to use space heaters to help heat your home this winter, use extreme caution, advises the safety professionals at Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL). According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) supplemental heating equipment, such as electrical and kerosene heaters, is the leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January and February and trails only cooking equipment as the leading cause of home fires year-round.

"Central home heating systems are not the main fire culprits, but space heaters are," says John Drengenberg, UL's Global Consumer Affairs manager. "Consumers should know that space heaters need space and they should be placed at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn."

UL offers the following safety tips and precautions when using space heaters:

- Space heaters have one function - to provide supplemental heat. Don't use them to warm bedding, cook food, thaw pipes or dry clothing. Misusing space heaters can put you and your family at risk of fire or burn injuries.
- Select heating equipment that has the UL Mark. The UL Mark on a product means that UL technical staff members have tested representative samples of the product for foreseeable safety hazards.
- Remember that 3-foot safety zone. Keep things that burn at least 3 feet away from space heaters.
- Turn off space heaters when you are not in the room or when you go to sleep.
- Supervise children and pets at all times when space heaters are in use. Even the slightest contact with a heating coil or element can cause a severe burn.
- If you have an electric space heater, check for frayed insulation, broken wires or overheating. Have all problems repaired by a professional technician before operating.
- When buying space heaters, look for devices with automatic shut-off features and heating element guards.
- If you have a liquid-fueled space heater, use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Never use gasoline or any other substitute fuel. The wrong fuel could burn hotter than the equipment's design limits and cause a serious fire.
- When refueling, turn off the heater and let it cool down completely before adding fuel. Wipe up any spills promptly.
- If you're considering buying a kerosene heater, check with your local fire department to find out if it is legal in your community.
- Avoid using extension cords with space heaters. If you must use one, make sure you choose an extension cord of the right wire gauge size and type for your heaters.
- Keep the air heater's power supply cord away from high-traffic areas in your home. You don't want people walking on or tripping over the cord.

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>