

Space Heaters Guidelines



Although electric space heaters may be a necessary evil in New England, they can pose a significant fire and/or injury hazard if some basic precautions are not taken. The following are some general guidelines regarding space heater safety.

- Space heaters should not be placed under desks. The area under many desks is a haven for items such as handbags, shoes, boots, boxes, etc., any of which could catch fire if they come in contact with or even sit close to the face of the heater.
- Heaters should be equipped with a “tip switch” which shuts the unit off if it is knocked over. Those heaters without this switch should not be allowed in your buildings.
- Cords and plugs must be in good condition with no frayed, broken or cracked insulation or broken or bent prongs.
- Space heaters should never be connected to extension cords. They should be plugged directly into an outlet.
- All space heaters must be shut off, or better yet, unplugged at the end of the workday. This is especially important on Friday afternoons. A space heater left on in a vacant office is a disaster waiting to happen.
- We strongly recommend that all space heaters be inspected and approved prior to their use in any town/school buildings. The Fire Department’s Fire Prevention Officer or the Electrical Inspector would be typical choices for this task.
- Finally, electric space heaters typically pull 600-1,500 watts each. Be sure that the circuits in offices can take the additional load of one or more of these units. A tripped circuit breaker can be more than just an inconvenience especially if it should result in the loss of electronic data.