



Space Heater Safety and Fire Prevention

The fire safety slogan for space heaters is "Give Space Heaters Space"

Each year space heaters cause hundreds of home and business fires resulting in fire deaths, injuries, and millions of dollars in damage. As with all heating equipment, it is important to know how to use a space heater safely and to prevent a space heater from causing a fire in your home or business. Home heating is the second leading cause of house fires behind cooking.

It is extremely important that the manufacturer's instructions for each space heater are followed. The manufacturer's instructions should never be removed from a space heater and can usually be found on the cord or the back of the space heater.

Each space heater model has variant manufacturer's instructions.

Space heaters must be stamped, have an *Underwriters Laboratories (UL)*, or independent testing laboratories mark. Any heater too old to have an independent testing laboratories mark is too old to operate safely.

It is in the Minnesota State Fire Code that space heaters should be plugged directly into an outlet and not an extension cord, surge protector, or multi-plug. Most of the manufacturer's instructions will give this direction or at least advise against it. Business owners should consider making an office policy that space heaters must be plugged in directly to an outlet and unplugged when not in use.

Keep space heaters away from combustibles, papers, briefcases, shoes, boots, coats, lunch boxes, shopping bags, basically anything on or under a desk or around the space heater that might catch on fire. Never operate a space heater next to a bed or under curtains.

In businesses, space heaters should be unplugged every night before the staff leaves. In homes, space heaters should only be plugged in when a room is occupied by a person who is awake. Most manufacturer's instructions say to shut off and unplug the heaters when not in use. Even the little red or green indicator on the space heater draws electricity when the unit is shut off.

Space heaters should not have frayed, pinched, or damaged cords. Space heater cords should not be run under rugs or any other materials.

A space heater should be in good condition. All the knobs should be in place and secure, the front grate/cage should be secure, and there should be no major damage to the unit.

No tape, wire, or rope should be used to repair the heater, hang it, prop it, or keep it in place.

Allow the heater venting space so it does not overheat or ignite items around it on fire. Venting or distance information should be in the manufacturer's instructions.

Business owners should be aware that there are fire codes in the Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC) that apply to the use of space heaters in commercial buildings. This includes office spaces, retail stores, restaurants, general businesses, and any building listed in the MSFC. The codes are listed below.

Minnesota State Fire Code

Section 605

605.10 Portable, electric space heaters. Portable, electric space heaters shall comply with Sections 605.10.1 through 605.10.4.

605.10.1 Listed and labeled. Only listed and labeled portable, electric space heaters shall be used.

605.10.2 Power supply. Portable, electric space heaters shall be plugged directly into an approved receptacle.

605.10.3 Extension cords. Portable, electric space heaters shall not be plugged into extension cords.

605.10.4 Prohibited areas. Portable, electric space heaters shall not be operated within 3 feet (914 mm) of any combustible materials. Portable, electric space heaters shall be operated only in locations for which they are listed.