



safety focus

Space Heaters

Cold weather brings questions about portable or “space” heater use, as many employees work in areas that may be uncomfortable without the use of these compact heating units.

Did you know that OHSU has a safety policy that describes their appropriate use?

OHSU policy does not allow for space heaters in any building in which patients are seen or cared for. This includes: OHSU Hospital, Doernbecher Children's Hospital, Casey Eye Institute, Emma Jones Hall (first floor), Hatfield Research Center (floors 8-14), the MBS Building, Multnomah Pavilion, the Outpatient Clinics Building, Physicians Pavilion, OHSU's VA units, and OHSU's community health care facilities.

Placing space heaters in any building is a potential fire hazard if their use is not carefully monitored. Placing space heaters in buildings in which patients are seen or cared for violates a fire code that exists to protect patients, visitors and employees. Violating the fire code also puts OHSU in a liable position should an accident occur.

Portable space heaters that are purchased for work areas where they are permitted should be the oil-filled radiant energy type of heaters:

- Plug directly into electric outlets **without** the use of power strips or extension cords.
- Do **not** use in areas where curtains, drapes, linen, or other combustibles (i.e.: paper) could fall or be placed on the heater, or in areas where flammable vapors could be present.
- Units must have a minimum of 18 inches clearance from combustible materials (e.g.: recycle bins, curtains, cardboard, etc.).
- Must be unplugged at the end of each workday.

OHSU wants to provide a safe environment for patients and a comfortable work environment for employees. Please plan ahead for Oregon's cold weather.

- Dress in layers or have a sweater available in your work area.
- Talk with your supervisor and ask him or her to evaluate the situation, recognizing that your colleagues may tolerate cold and heat differently from how you do.
- If your supervisor needs additional assistance in moderating the temperature in your work area, they may contact Facilities Management.

