

Heating Up In Cool Weather

Now that cooler weather has arrived, this is a good time for a reminder about the use of space heaters as an alternative heat source at OHSU. Radiant-type space heaters are allowed in some buildings including most research and academic buildings. However, space heaters are **prohibited** in all OHSU Healthcare facilities including: OHS, KPV, HRC, DCH, MNP, SJH, PPV, CHH and all off-site clinics.

Open element (glowing wire) heaters are not permitted in **ANY** building. These are dangerous from a fire safety perspective and are inefficient.



The potential for misuse of space heaters is one of the most significant fire safety issues that arise during the heating season. Fires caused by space heaters are often

not caused by product defects but by how the heater was used and operated. Typical misuses of space heaters that lead to fires include the following:

- Use of damaged power cords, constricted power cords (resistance heat build-up), extension cords, and faulty plugs.
- Electrical overloading on receptacles and branch circuits.
- Failure to maintain safe clearance from combustible furnishings and materials to the space heater.

Call OHSU's Weather Hotline for current conditions: 503-494-9021

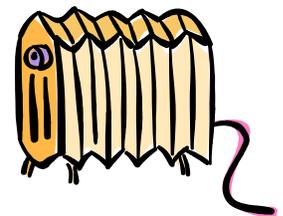
SafetyNews Questions or suggestions?
EHRS: 503-494-7795

In most cases, a minimum recommended clearance is at least 36 inches from adjacent ordinary combustible materials such as cardboard, paper and fabrics.

- Unattended use of a space heater for a continuous period of time.
- Physical damage to the heater itself during use. Some of these have been around for years and have gotten banged up.

For more information about space heaters in healthcare areas please reference the [Portable Space Heater Policy](#).

Be safe this heating season and call EHRS at 4-7795 for additional guidance.



Decorating by the Book

OHSU's Holiday Décor Policy



Familiar with the OHSU Holiday Decorations Safety Policy? If you enjoy festive decorations in your area during the holiday season, this is a must read! You'll find all the details to guide you regarding safe placement, condition of electrical decorations, and observance of Fire Codes and best practices for fire safety.



You'll find the most current policy at:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/integrity/policies/environmentalhealth-policies.cfm>



Topic of the Month:

SLIPS, TRIPS, and FALLS

Slips, trips and falls happen more often than they should at OHSU, and these accidents can create serious injuries, cost money to treat, and take weeks or months to heal. All of this can prevent you from living the life you want. Most of these accidents can be avoided if you are alert to potential hazards. The following tips can help keep you healthy.



SLOW DOWN – Trips and falls occur most often when people are in a hurry. Short-cuts are often the culprit! We all have tried to jump over something instead of walking "the long way around" to our destination. Learn to slow down and avoid potentially hazardous short-cuts.

WEAR GOOD SHOES – Walkways and walking surfaces at OHSU vary in slope and surface texture. Shoes with slip-resistant soles and flat heels will reduce the chances of a fall. Be aware of the kind of terrain you'll be covering throughout the day and plan accordingly.

PAY ATTENTION – Watch where you are walking. Learning to recognize and avoid hazards saves time, money, and injuries. Areas not designed for foot traffic often consist of unstable, shaky, or slippery surfaces.

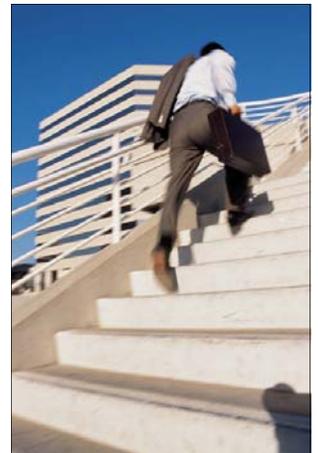


CLEAN UP SPILLS – Wet or slippery surfaces sometimes don't appear dangerous until you walk on them, and then it's too late. Clean up all spills, including liquids and solids or powders, as soon as you notice them. If it's not your area, please notify someone who can clean it up.

WALK SAFELY – If you have to walk on slippery or wet surfaces, take slow, short steps. Use handrails when walking on ramps and stairs. Also, take your hands out of your pockets in case you need them. Don't try to run, jump or slide across slick surfaces.

GOOD LIGHTING – Good lighting can help you spot hazards long before you get to them. Poor lighting can prevent you from seeing what is in the way. When you enter a dark room, always turn on the light even if you don't need to stay very long. Keep walkways clear of obstructions especially in areas that have lower light levels. Facilities and Real Estate (F&RE) can replace light fixtures or bulbs, as needed.

USE STAIRS SAFELY – It is easy to lose your footing when walking up or down stairs. Be cautious of worn or broken steps, and of lighting that might make it difficult to see properly. Never run up or down stairs, and avoid skipping steps. If you have to carry items while climbing stairs, be sure that your vision is not blocked. Try to keep one hand on the rail; it is often too late to grab it when you are falling.



STEP STOOL OR LADDER – When you need to get something from a shelf higher than your shoulders, use a step stool or ladder. Chairs are NOT meant to be used as step stools and will almost always move when you do!

TELL SOMEBODY – Remember to report slips, trips and falls as well as near misses to [Risk Management](#) by way of [WSIRS](#) (Worker & Student Injury Reporting System for employees and students) or [PSN](#) (Patient Safety Net for patients and visitors).

Holiday Safety at Home

Many of us decorate our homes to celebrate the season, but it is important to give consideration to common safety hazards:

Lights & Electric

- As you pull lights out of storage, check for frayed wires and broken bulbs. Make sure they're approved for outdoor use.
- Plug only as many light strands into one cord or circuit as recommended. Follow manufacturer's recommendations or consult an electrician.
- When stringing outside lights, keep ladders and decorations away from overhead power lines.
- Do not use metal staples or nails as fasteners for lights.
- Don't run electric extension cords across driveways or where people may trip on them.



Fire & Combustion

- If you choose to have a real tree indoors, use a stand with a built-in water reservoir and make sure to keep it full.
- The drier a tree or decorative greenery is, the more combustible it becomes. After the holidays put these out for recycle before they become dry. (This also saves extra clean-up of all those little needles!)
- Never leave candles unattended. When candles are lit, make sure a responsible person is in the room. Before you leave or go to sleep, extinguish them.
- Always keep open flames away from all combustibles such as drapes, paper, and walls. Remember, concentrated heat rises and poses a hazard.



For a current issue of SafetyNews online, and for archives, visit:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/integrity/ehrs/safety/gen/safetynews.cfm>

The SafetyTeam page is available at:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/services/integrity/ehrs/safety/gen/safetyteam.cfm>

These pages are updated regularly. If there are OHSU resources you'd like to see linked, please send suggestions to the SafetyTeam Coordinator at:

safeteam@ohsu.edu

Systems Thinking: Safety Tip!

This example shows the value of a culture of safety. Injuries can be prevented when people are encouraged to take the time to act safely.

Employee: "I was placing a receipt on the receipt spindle when it started to fall. When I tried to catch the falling spindle, it punctured my hand. I washed it and called our Safety Coordinator. She sent me to employee health where my immunization records were checked. I was given antibiotic cream and a Band-Aid."

Supervisor: "This was an accidental occurrence. It is possible to add a safety tip to the spindle. The safety tip is now on order."

An incident such as this could be repeated by other staff.



It was determined that this was a random accident. Taking a moment to examine the physical conditions of the incident and research options can lead to a safer environment. The supervisor's solution dramatically improves safe handling of the receipt spindle for everyone.

Questions? Ask Environmental Health & Radiation Safety:

503-494-7795

