



# ONE-MINUTE Insurance Manager

## SPACE HEATERS

## Portable space heaters kill and cause total fire claims!

Improperly used, temporary portable space heaters have caused many fires, extensive property damage and the loss of human life, including overnight blazes that have killed occupants in their sleep.

Also known as temporary space heaters, construction heaters, garage heaters, and box heaters, they are typically self-contained, metal sheathed, fan-forced 240 volt (3,000-4,000 watt) portable units and can be found in residential, commercial and institutional properties, including sometimes in churches, parsonages, rented dwellings, campgrounds, retreat centres, and other buildings owned by charities. It is important to know the correct procedure to reduce or eliminate the hazards associated with their use. This bulletin provides general guidance as to when, where and how these heaters should be used - and not be used - to ensure safety and to avoid loss of life and unnecessary claims.

### HAZARDS:

- Improper installation and usage of portable heaters is a potential fire hazard
- Improperly designed heating elements can fail and overheat when connected to a power source
- Portable heaters are for temporary use only and should never be used as a permanent source of heat
- Operating these heaters for long periods of time and left plugged in, is a fire waiting to happen
- Removing the plug on the electrical cord and hardwiring these units into a junction box is unsafe

### EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL SPACE HEATERS:



## Did you know?

- According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) portable space heaters account for 32% of house fires
- More tragically, 79% of all home heating fires are attributable to space heaters!

### ✓ SAFETY CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Never use an extension cord with a portable heater. Never change or tamper with a portable heater.
- ✓ Portable heaters are designed to be temporary, not to be mounted, permanently installed, or hard-wired. If an area requires permanent heat for more than special or temporary use, install a permanent heating system.
- ✓ Throw out old space heaters! Only use accredited portable heaters (e.g. CSA approved).
- ✓ Manufacturer's instructions and warnings should always be carefully heeded and must be followed.
- ✓ Ensure heater is suitable for the location where it is being operated temporarily.
- ✓ Fully insert the plug into an approved electrical outlet, and unplug after each use.
- ✓ Use the heater on a non-combustible floor surface that extends at least 1.5 metres (5 feet) beyond the front.
- ✓ Locate away from combustibles or obstructions that might limit the airflow to, and from, the heater unit.
- ✓ Unless it has an automatic shut-off, never leave the heater on while unattended. Leave enough time to cool down, before moving or storing.
- ✓ Collect and document the name of manufacturer, model and serial number. Check for any recalls.

**Don't let the careless use of portable  
space heaters cause preventable death,  
damage to your property, or  
affect your future insurability!**