California Schools JPA℠

SAFETY MATTERS
RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE NOV. 18, 2022

- Heaters for Safety on the Job
- Basic Standards
- Do's in Using Portable Heaters
- Don'ts in Using Portable Heaters

WORKPLACE FIRE PROTECTION

OBJECTIVE The holidays are often a time when staff choose to take a bit of time off from work. With many districts and community colleges operating on limited staff or limited in-person interactions, it is important to be extra mindful with workplace safety. Below are a few tips for the safe use and maintenance of portable heaters in the workplace.

HEATERS FOR SAFETY ON THE JOB

Portable heaters have become common among various worksites. Not only are they necessary in workplaces that need heating in certain areas, they are also ideal in offices and other workplaces with a small floor area.

But like any invention, portable heaters are not perfect. Just as they give several benefits for a cold workplace or creating a space to enjoy, they also pose some hazards and can be the cause of a number of accidents—the most common of which is fire.

SAFETY MATTERS
RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

California Schools JPA℠

SPACE HEATER SAFETY QUICK TIPS

- **DO** Plug your portable space heater directly into a wall outlet.
- **DO** Keep your space heater in low moisture rooms.
- **DO** Keep your space heater at a safe distance from children, pets, and flammable items.
- **DO** Always follow the directions.
- **DO** Take a broken space heater to a qualified service center and discontinue use immediately.

BASIC STANDARDS

Before purchasing a portable heater for your workplace, make sure it is approved for commercial use by a nationally recognized safety testing laboratory. It's best to go for a heater with a tip-over switch. This feature allows the heater to turn off automatically when it is knocked over. Also, make sure that the heater has a guard that keeps fingers and flammable materials away from the heating element. The guard usually comes in the form of a wire grill.

DO'S IN USING PORTABLE HEATERS

- Place the heater at least 11 feet away from combustible materials, including curtains, upholstered furniture, and walls.
- Run the power cord so that it does not create a trip and fall hazard.
- Keep space heaters away from exits, walkways, or other paths of travel.
- Check with your facilities management department. The electrical distribution system for some buildings may not be able to support space heaters and may repeatedly trip electrical circuit breakers.
- Check the power cord for any signs of damage or frayed wires, and take it out of service if any are observed.
- Heaters must be monitored at all times when in operation. Do not leave running unattended and do not use heaters in rooms that are not continually occupied.
- Keep a fire extinguisher near every portable heater.
- Place the portable heater on the floor or on a location with secure footing or base.
- ***Never*** place a portable heater on tables or chairs.

SAFETY MATTERS
RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

California Schools JPA℠

- Perform a pre-operational inspection of the heater. Check for damage on its parts, knobs, coils, and legs. If damage is found, take the heater out of service immediately and have it repaired by a trained person.
- Disconnect the heating unit first before taking it to a trained person for repairs.
- Always keep clothes, plastic, and other combustible materials away from the heater coils as they can instantly ignite and start a fire.
- Ensure that the portable heater is plugged into properly grounded outlets.
- No matter what kind of portable heater you're using, you must keep and maintain a smoke detector in the area.
- Avoid using extension cords with the portable heater. If you really have to use an extension cord, make sure it is marked with a power rating that is at least as high as the heater itself.
- Make sure the electrical cord is ***not*** exposed to the intense heat generated by the heater.

DON'TS IN USING PORTABLE HEATERS

- Never overload the circuit used for the heater.
- Never place portable heaters on tables, chairs, stair steps, pallets, and other locations where they are likely to fall or be knocked over.
- Never let extension cords get buried under rugs or carpets.
- Never touch the coils of the portable heater while it is on or cooling.
- Do not place a fan in front of the portable heater; the fan can melt or start a fire.
- Never place anything on top of the heater's cord.
- Never stand on a portable heater.
- Never leave the heater unattended, especially when leaving the work site.
- Space heaters are not allowed in labs or other areas where hazardous materials are present.

RESOURCES

Safety Services

This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.

SAFETY MATTERS
RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

California Schools JPA℠

SIGN-IN SHEET

WORKPLACE FIRE PROTECTION

Trainer: _____ Trainer's Signature: _____

Date: _____ Organization: _____ Department: _____

Class Participants:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____