

# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™**  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND  
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Space Heaters*

Space heaters and other types of portable heaters are widely used in homes, offices and other areas to supplement the major heating system.

According to National Fire Protection Association, based on 2009-2013 annual averages:

- ✓ Space heaters, whether portable or stationary, accounted for two of every five (40%) of home heating fires and four out of five (84%) of home heating fire deaths.
- ✓ Placing things that can burn too close to heating equipment or placing heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding, was the leading factor contributing to ignition in fatal home heating fires and accounted for more than half (56%) of home heating fire deaths.
- ✓ Nearly half (49%) of all home heating fires occurred in December, January and February.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that an estimated 6,000 persons receive hospital emergency room care for burn injuries associated with contacting hot surfaces of room heaters, mostly in non-fire situations.

Realizing that in many of our buildings improper insulation, undersized heating equipment and the fact that different folks have varied body temperature standards, portable heaters may be needed.

However, we must practice the safety tips that can greatly reduce the risk of possible deaths, injuries, or loss of property.

MSU policy 95.502 has established the following requirements for the use of portable, electric space heaters within its facilities:

- Heater must be Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) listed and labeled.
- In good working condition. Never operate a heater you suspect is damaged. Before use, inspect the heater, cord, and plug for damage. Follow all manufacturer operation and maintenance instructions.
- Equipped with a safety "tip-over" shut-off feature. Insure that the heater is placed on a stable, level surface, and located where it will not be knocked over.
- Plugged directly into a hard-wired electric wall outlet. Only the power cord supplied with the unit may be used. Extension cords or power strips must not be used under any circumstance. Never run the heater's cord under rugs or carpeting. This can damage the cord, causing it and nearby objects to burn. To prevent electric shocks and electrocutions, always keep electric heaters away from water, and never touch an electric heater if you are wet.
- Positioned a minimum of three feet from any combustible material. Keep combustible material such as beds, sofas, curtains, papers, and clothes at least 3 feet from the front, sides, and rear of the heater. This requirement prohibits the placement of a portable, electric space heater under one's desk.
- Continuously under supervision. The unit must never be left unattended. It must be unplugged, not just turned off, anytime you leave your work area.

Portable, electric space heaters are prohibited in any unattended area and specifically in the following areas:

- Residence halls.
- Storage rooms and closets.
- Laboratories.

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Sources: [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)  
<http://publicsafety.tufts.edu>  
<http://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/95502.pdf>