

Space Heater Safety

As temperatures fall, electric space heaters emerge to supplement heating needs. Used correctly, these heaters can provide a safe, reliable source of heat; used incorrectly, they can quickly turn into a fire or burn hazard. The Consumer Product Safety Commission provides the following safe usage recommendations for portable electric heaters.

- Place heaters on the floor. Never place heaters on furniture— they may fall, dislodging or breaking parts in the heater, which could result in a fire or shock hazard.
- Keep heaters at least three feet from objects such as curtains, papers, and furniture.
- Keep space heaters out of the reach of children and never leave a space heater unsupervised when children are present.
- Unless certified for that purpose, do not use heaters in wet or moist places, such as bathrooms. Corrosion or other damage to parts in the heater may lead to a fire or shock hazard.
- Do not hide cords under rugs or carpets. Placing anything on top of the cord could cause the cord to overheat, and can cause a fire.
- Do not use an extension cord unless absolutely necessary. If you must use an extension cord, it must be marked #14 or #12 AWG. Only use extension cords bearing the label of an independent testing laboratory such as U.L. or E.T.L.
- Be sure the plug fits snugly into the outlet. Heaters draw lots of power, so the cord and plug may feel warm. If the plug feels hot, unplug the heater and have a qualified repairman check for problems. If the heater and plug are found to be working properly, have the outlet replaced.
- Broken heaters should be checked and repaired by a qualified appliance service center. Do not attempt to repair, adjust, or replace parts in the heater yourself.
- Don't use portable electric heaters manufactured prior to 1991. New heaters have many safety enhancements that may prevent burn injuries to children who play too near a heater, or reduce the risk of ignition of combustible materials that could come into contact with the heater.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.