A MINI TRAINING SESSION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Take on Safety

Portable Heaters

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Overview: Covers hazards associated with portable heaters and measures to address the hazards.

Purpose: This is intended to raise awareness about space heater safety hazards and methods to address them with the goal to prevent injuries to persons and damage to property.

Preparation:
- Read and become familiar with this Quick Take. *Change as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your department.*
- Review your organization's policy regarding portable heaters and where the policy can be located. Ensure that this policy matches the Quick Take.

Handouts: Quick Review of Safety—Portable Heaters: Fire Prevention

Policy *[Instructor information only, not to be read aloud]*

An organization should have a policy regarding portable heaters. If they are not explicitly banned, guidelines for their use should be adopted and communicated to employees to ensure safe use. Violations of the policy should result in corrective and disciplinary action.

If your organization has an appliance/portable heater policy, briefly describe the policy to your employees, specifically if portable heaters are permitted. Inform employees about the location of the policy.

Portable Heater Hazards

[*Instructor note:* The following is only to be used if your organization allows use of space/portable heaters in the workplace]

Portable heaters, also known as space heaters, can keep you warm, but they can also pose fire, electrical and tripping hazards. Heaters can also interfere with the building heating or air conditioning systems by causing thermostats to read higher than the temperature of the larger zone. This can make sections of the building colder than needed and make your co-workers uncomfortable.

Portable heaters also use a lot of current and can trip electric breakers, cutting power to yourself and others. Be considerate when using heaters.

Using a space heater presents some risks; however, we can minimize the risk with proper preparation and controls. Your health and safety is important to us; we don't want you to get hurt.

Prevention

The following best practices can help us reduce the risks of fire and electrical hazards while ensuring optimal operation of heating and air conditioning systems if space heaters are permitted.

- Heaters should be electric or radiant only. They should not have open flames or exposed heating elements. Nor should they produce carbon monoxide.
- Portable heaters should be certified from an independent testing laboratory, such as UL (Underwriter's Laboratory).
- Heaters should be equipped with a high-temperature-limiting device and tip-over protection that cuts the power should they tip over.
- Place portable heaters at least three feet away from combustible materials, such as paper, curtains, clothing, rugs or desks.
- Position portable heaters outside of high-traffic areas to limit tripping hazards. Position the cords away from walking paths.
- As a general rule, plug portable heaters directly into wall outlets. Many extension cords or power strips use cords that are not designed for the amperage required to operate a heater and may overheat.
    - Using power strips with portable heaters increases the risk of overloading the breaker as more items are plugged into the power strip. Power strips and surge-protecting power strips are only rated for use with small amperage equipment, such as computers and monitors.
- Heaters with damaged or frayed wiring or cords should not be used. They should be removed from service.
- Do not leave portable heaters unattended. When leaving your work space at the end of the day or for long periods, turn off and unplug the heater.
- Avoid placing portable heaters near thermostats. When a thermostat senses an area is too warm, the heating system may no longer supply hot air to the zone where that thermostat is located and could make the area colder for other employees. Conversely, if the air conditioning system is running, the thermostat could read too high of a temperature and try to cool the area, thus creating a never ending feedback loop where the system is constantly running and wasting energy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How can we reduce the risks of space heaters and still maintain a comfortable temperature?
- What do we do if we encounter an unapproved portable heater?

[Title] Session Planning and Review

Trainer	Training Date
Department(s)	

TRAINING GOALS

- [goal 1]
- [goal 2]
- [goal 3]

RESOURCES

- [text with link]

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

[comments added here]

Attendance Record

Training Session [Session title]

Trainer Training Date

Participant Name (printed)	Participant Signature