



Indiana Construction Association

One North Capitol Avenue
Suite 1000
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2026
Phone (317) 472-6777
Fax (317) 472-6767

TO O IBOX TALK

Portable Heater Safety Tips

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Cool weather is approaching and portable heat sources on the jobsite will become common. The National Fire Protection Association reports that heating devices are the leading cause of fires during December, January and February. Proper use of portable heaters is essential in order to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

The following is a list of some of the basic guidelines for safe usage of portable heaters:

- Many heaters are not suitable for use on wood floors or other combustible surfaces. Consult the manufacturer's recommendations for guidance.
- Portable heaters should be kept a minimum of 10 feet away from combustible materials at all times (papers, curtains, fuel sources, etc.).
- When placing a portable heater, always be sure that it is level and stable in order to prevent displacement or tipping. Remember, wind can be a factor in stability.
- It is best not to use an extension cord for electric-powered portable heaters. However, if necessary, be sure to use heavy-duty cords that are identified as appropriate for the wattage of the heater. An ordinary home-type extension cord may not be adequate.
- When using a portable heater that operates on a thermostat control or intermittent operation, a warning label noting that the unit may start at any time should be visible.

There are a variety of portable heaters available, depending on your purpose. Always be sure to consult the manufacturer's recommendations to find the right fit for your needs. Below is a list of some of the common types of portable heaters found on jobsites, and some of the basic rules of safety to follow when using them.

Liquid Fuel, Natural Gas, Liquid Petroleum (LP) Gas Heaters

- Liquid fuel, natural gas and LP gas heaters should only be operated by qualified persons who are familiar with the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- Hoses and fittings should be checked prior to using to ensure that they have the appropriate capacity and pressure ratings based on the manufacturer's recommendations. Inspect them regularly for damage and deterioration as well.
- During fueling, and routinely, all fuel lines and connections should be inspected for leaks. If a leak is detected, do not use the unit, connection or fuel line until repaired according to the manufacturer's recommendation.
- When in use, these heaters should be checked at least once per shift by qualified personnel to be sure that they are working properly.
- Heaters should be turned off and the pilot light extinguished prior to relocating.
- Before heaters are disconnected, the fuel supply should be turned off at the source prior to extinguishing the flame so that it purges the fuel supply line.
- Never use a "slip-end" connector with these types of devices.
- If using a flexible fuel supply line, be sure to use the shortest length that is practical and never exceed 25 feet.
- Take care to prevent fuel supply lines from coming into contact with hot surfaces (above 125°).
- LP gas heaters should be equipped with an approved regulator in the supply line between the fuel cylinder and the heater unit.
- All liquid fuel, natural gas and LP gas heaters should be equipped with a flame-loss device to stop the flow of fuel if the flame is extinguished.
- No more than one day's supply of heater fuel should be stored inside a building in the vicinity of the heater.

continued on next page



Building Your Quality of Life

Portable Heater Safety Tips, continued

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- Bulk fuel storage should be outside of the building where the heater is being used. Storage should not be within 10 feet of floor penetrations used for vertical access unless separated from the penetration by full-height masonry walls.
- All fuel storage should be located a minimum of 25 feet from heaters, torches, welding equipment and similar sources of ignition.
- LP gas cylinders should never be filled inside a building or structure. Likewise, empty cylinders should be stored outdoors.

It is important to practice special precautions when utilizing these heating devices. Always follow the manufacturer's warnings, and practice common sense. When purchasing a heater, consider one with added safety features. Most newer models have been manufactured with safety in mind.

Refer to OSHA 29CFR 1926.154 for regulations on temporary heaters.

Portable heaters can provide instant warmth but can also be dangerous if not used properly. Keep these tips in mind when working around temporary heating devices. The life you save may be your own.

Company Name
Project #/Name

Meeting Location

Person Conducting Meeting

Items Discussed

Problem Areas or Concerns

Attendees

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Comments
