

# Consumer Product Safety Commission

## Electric Space Heaters

### Fact Sheet

CPSC Document #098

---

#### THE STATISTICS

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that in 1994, electric space heaters were associated with 2,400 fires resulting 80 deaths, 240 injuries and \$48.2 million in property loss.

#### THE PROBLEM

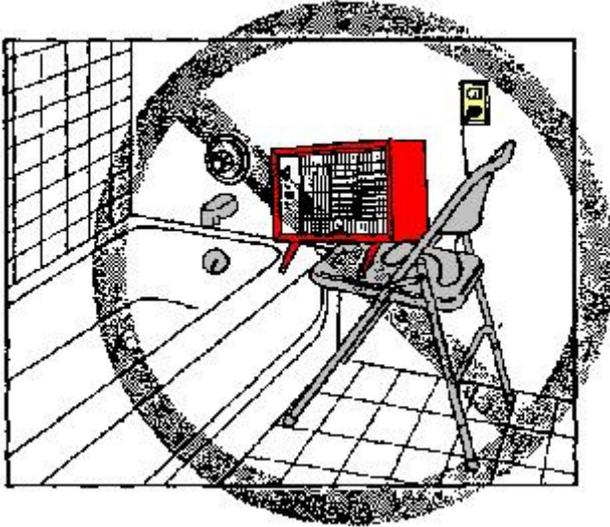
Even though electric space heaters don't have an open flame, the heating elements of some types of electric heaters are hot enough to ignite nearby combustibles like draperies, paper, clothing, furniture, and flammable liquids. It is, therefore, important to check surrounding objects periodically to see if they feel hot. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions to see how far the heater should be placed from combustible materials, and for how far the heater should be placed from the floor so that carpeting or flooring materials don't ignite.

Additionally, to prevent electrocutions, always keep portable electric heaters away from water and never use them in a bathroom or near a sink. (If you must use an appliance near water, **always** use a ground fault circuit interrupter)!

#### SAFETY TIPS

CPSC recommends the following when selecting an electric heater:

- Look for one that is listed with a nationally-recognized testing laboratory. These heaters have been tested to meet specific safety standards, and manufacturers are required to provide important use and care information to the consumer. On heaters that are not listed, consumers have less assurance that the safety features and operating instructions are adequate.
- Purchase a heater with a guard around the heating element. A wire grill or other protection is essential to keep fingers or fabrics from touching the hot element. Portable electric heaters that heat by circulating oil or water, however, usually have lower surface temperatures and may not need guards.
- Before using the heater, read and follow the instructions for its operation and maintenance.
- If you must use an extension cord, make sure it is a heavy duty cord marked with a # 14 gauge or larger wire. An incorrectly-sized cord may create a fire hazard. If the heater's plug has a grounding prong, use only a grounding (three-wire) extension cord.
- Never run the heater's cord (or any cord) under rugs or carpeting.
- Do not leave the heater operating unattended or operating while sleeping.



Portable electric air heaters are designed for use only as temporary supplemental heating and only while attended.

- To prevent electrical shocks and electrocutions, always keep portable electric heaters away from water and never touch an electric heater if you are wet.

#### SAFETY TIPS

- Do not use an electric heater as a dryer by placing clothing over it and never use it heater to thaw pipes.
- Keep the heater in safe working condition. Replace missing guards and controls at once. Never operate a defective heater.
- Don't place the heater where children might play near it or where people might trip over or bump into it.
- Place the heater on a level surface for stability.
- Regardless of the type of heating system you have, install and maintain at least one smoke detector that is in good working condition on each floor of your home.