SPACE HEATERS

Space heaters carry a much greater risk of causing a fire than central heating, such as furnaces. Space heaters present a greater potential for human error such as leaving them too close to combustible materials or failing to install, fuel, operate and maintain them properly.

**Safety must be a top consideration when using space heaters.**

**Facts & Figures**

Based on 2011-2015 annual averages:

- Space heaters, whether portable or stationary, accounted for just over two of every five (43%) of home heating fires and four out of five (85%) of home heating fire deaths.
- The leading factor contributing to home heating fires (28%) was failure to clean, principally creosote from solid-fueled heating equipment, primarily chimneys.
- 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 third leading factor contributing to ignition in fatal home heating fires and accounted for more than half (53%) of home heating fire deaths.
- Nearly half (48%) of all home heating fires occurred in December, January and February.

Room gas heaters, portable kerosene heaters and portable electric heaters have the highest risk of death and injuries, including non-fire related deaths due to carbon monoxide. Heating equipment is leading causes of home fires during the months of December, January and February and trails only cooking equipment in home fires year-round.

**Due to the risks associated with space heaters – most facilities at Harvard prohibit their use.** If you have a problem with the heating/ventilation in your office space or residence – contact your building manager for assistance.

**SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**
If you must use a space heater - The following steps and safety precautions must be observed:

- You must have approval from your Building Manager prior to purchasing or using a space heater.
- The space heater selected must be tested by an independent testing laboratory such as Underwriter’s Laboratories (UL).
- The preferred style of space heaters are fully enclosed by design and have no external surfaces that reach temperatures capable of igniting, such as an oil filled radiant heater.
- Keep the space heater accessible – do not storage anything within three feet of the unit. The leading cause of space heater fires is combustible materials too close to the heater.
- The unit must have thermostatic controls and automatic shutoff features.
- The space heater must be plugged directly into an outlet.

- Do not use a light-duty extension cord or a multi outlet strip/surge protector; it can start a fire with a high-wattage appliance. The unit must be grounded with a three-pronged plug.
- Do not use an extension cord or strip plug.
- Run the power cord so that no one steps on or trips over it.
- Turn off the heater when you leave the room - unplug the heater when you leave for the day.
- DO NOT place electric heaters in bathrooms.
- Always read and follow manufacturer’s instructions.