Kerosene Heaters - Safety Controls

New generation kerosene heaters can still cause problems if warnings are not heeded.

Improved design has increased the popularity of unvented portable kerosene heaters. They are not what they use to be—but despite improved design and construction features, serious fire and life safety hazards are still present.

Heaters should only be used in a safe area. *Do not* use in tightly closed rooms, garages, workshops, etc., where there might be flammable liquids or combustible dust.

Safety features on new kerosene heaters include:

- Improved construction with lower center of gravity to prevent tipping.
- Automatic snuffing device to extinguish the flame in the event the heater is knocked over.
- Fuel is wick-fed, rather than gravity or pressure-fed. This permits the fuel tank to be located further away from the flame.
- Modern heaters are purported to burn more efficiently, reducing the problem of carbon monoxide emission from incomplete combustion. However, ventilation must be provided. A minimum of one square inch opening of a window or door for every 1000 BTU heat rating on the heater is recommended.

Unvented heaters may cause burns and fires if used carelessly.

1. Improper placement:
   - The heater should be placed on level ground. It should be kept clear from combustible walls, draperies, carpets and furniture. The heater should be kept away from the traffic pattern to avoid tripping, contact burns or ignition of clothing. Children and pets should be kept away from portable heaters. Surface temperature can exceed 500º F.

2. Improper fuel and refueling:
   - The use of incorrect fuel may result in the production of excessive amounts of toxic gases, smoke or flare-ups. High grade kerosene should be used. Never refuel the heater while it is still hot. Never fuel the heater inside. Fuel tanks should be removed and filled outside.

3. Fuel storage:
   - Kerosene should be stored in a tightly closed container, preferably an Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed safety container. The container should be stored in a safe, cool and dry location.

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Precautions to be considered before using portable heaters:

1. Follow manufacturer's instructions for safe use and maintenance. Warnings should be posted on the heater. Be certain that state and local laws permit the use of unvented portable heaters.

2. Look for the following features on new portable heaters:

   - Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or other recognized testing laboratories label or listing.

   - Automatic flame extinguishing device in the event the heater is tipped over.

   - An oxygen depletion sensor.

   - Removable fuel tank.

   - An accurate, easy to read fuel gauge.

   - Additional Features

     (1) A reliable automatic smoke/fire alarm detector should be installed in the vicinity of each portable heater.

     (2) An Underwriters Laboratories Class B or C fire extinguisher should be provided and located nearby heaters.

Contact your local Great American Loss Prevention Specialist for additional information.

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