

Protecting Our Parishes, Missions, and Schools

Safe Use of Space Heaters

Space heaters carry a much greater risk of causing a fire than central heat. Space heaters present a much greater potential for accidental fires due to misuse and/or human error, such as having them operating too close to combustible materials, or failing to utilize them properly.

When the temperature dips in Florida, people flock to the local stores and flea markets to purchase space heaters. These space heaters then show up at offices and homes.

Proper selection and use of space heaters must be a top priority when considering using them in your home or office. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that roughly 25,000 residential fires are caused by the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 fatalities.

Due to their inherent risk, many private companies prohibit the use of space heaters in the office environment. It is recommended that the use of space heaters be the last option in maintaining a comfortable work environment. Speak with your maintenance person or your pastor to see if the central HVAC system can be adjusted to accommodate your personal needs. In addition, you can always wear warmer clothing.

If you do utilize a space heater, the following safety precautions must be observed:

- You must have approval from your pastor or office manager prior to purchasing or using a space heater.
- The space heater selected must be U.L. listed and have an automatic shutoff and a tilt switch that turn the unit off if tipped over.
- The space heater must be fully enclosed by design and have no external surfaces that reach temperatures capable of starting a fire.
- Keep the space heater clear of combustible materials.
- The space heater must be plugged directly into an electrical outlet. Do not use light-duty extension cords or multi-outlet strip/surge protector; they can start fires because space heaters draw high amounts of wattage. The unit must have a three-prong plug with ground.
- Turn off heater when you leave the room – unplug the heater when you leave for the day.



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