The Smart Way to Use Space Heaters

Space heaters, including electric models and those powered by kerosene, are a convenient source of warmth during winter months, especially if there's a power outage, but they can be dangerous if not used properly.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), in a recent year, there were 10,900 residential fires and 190 deaths associated with space heaters. Space heater hazards stem not just from fires caused by contact with or close proximity to heating elements. They also include fires started by flammable fuels used in the heaters, defective wiring in the appliance and carbon monoxide poisoning caused by improper ventilation.

Stay warm *and* safe this winter by following these tips from the CPSC for using space heaters:

- Keep the heater at least three feet from flammable items such as curtains, furniture, or bedspreads.
- Select a space heater with a guard around the heating element.
- When buying a heater, choose one that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing institution such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Buy a heater appropriately sized for the area you want to heat.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Never leave a space heater unattended.
- Never go to sleep with a space heater on.
- Never use or store flammable liquids near a space heater.
- Do not use a heater in a bathroom– it's a high-moisture area that could cause damage.
- Keep heaters away from water to prevent electrocution.
- Do not use an extension cord with a space heater.
- Do not use the heater to dry clothes.
- Be sure the heater's plug fits snugly in an outlet. The cord and plug may feel warm when operating since the unit draws so much power, but they should not feel hot. If they do, unplug the heater and have a qualified repair person check for problems.
- Do not attempt to repair a broken heater yourself. It should be checked and repaired by a qualified appliance service center.