Office of Compliance Safety and Health **FAST FACTS**

Space Heaters

Portable space heaters can pose a major workplace fire safety hazard. Fires can be caused by space heaters without adequate safety features, space heaters placed near combustibles, or space heaters that are improperly plugged in.

Statistics about damage caused by space heaters in the workplace are not readily available, but public information is available on the effects of poorly utilized space heaters in the home. In 1999 (the most recent year in which statistics are available), space heaters in homes caused 2,800 structure fires and hundreds of deaths and injuries.

Space heaters can be used safely in the workplace if proper precautions are taken. A space heater used in the workplace should be approved for commercial use by a recognized safety testing laboratory, placed away from combustible materials, and have a tip-over switch to ensure it will turn off automatically if knocked over. Space heaters should also never be used with extension cords, as most extension cords are not rated for the higher power demands of space heaters and may become overloaded and catch fire.

Fast Facts About Space Heaters

Approximate Damages Caused by Space Heaters (in the home) During 1999*

- 2,800 home structure fires
- $69.5 million in property damage
- 48 civilian deaths
- 195 civilian injuries

** Source: National Fire Protection Association*

Things to Keep Away From Space Heaters in the Workplace

- Damaged power cords or excessive wiring
- Stacks of paper, wood, or other combustibles
- Clothing

Precautions for Safe Use of Space Heaters in the Workplace

- Should be approved by an OSHA recognized laboratory (such as Underwriters Laboratory, Factory Mutual, or the Canadian Standards Association)
- Should be in areas free of combustibles
- Should be equipped with a tip-over switch
- Should NOT be used with extension cords
- Should NOT be used with missing or broken parts (such as nobs, grills, or stands)