

Roger Williams University Portable Electric Heater and Open Flame Policy

Roger Williams University (RWU) recognizes that individuals have different levels of comfort associated with temperature and heat. However, portable electric heaters are a potential source of fire if not utilized properly. The requirements listed below, applicable fire and life safety codes, and manufacturer's recommendations must be followed to maintain a safe environment. This policy applies to all Roger Williams University and Roger Williams School of Law facilities (owned or rented). This policy also addresses the prohibition of certain open flame items such as candle and incense:

- Portable electric heaters are not permitted in University residence halls or apartments.
- Portable electric heaters are not intended for use as a permanent heating appliance. Approved portable electric heaters are intended to temporarily supplement an office area's heating needs until a permanent solution to correct the area's heating problem is identified, or as an authorized emergency use measure when a building's normal heating system fails. If an office area cannot be adequately heated via the installed building heating system, contact the RWU Office of Facilities Management via [work order](#); if the installed system cannot be repaired in a timely manner, Facilities may recommend a temporary portable electric heater meeting the requirements listed below.
- Where portable electric heaters are permitted, owners/users are responsible for their proper use and should read and comply with any and all manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Portable electric heaters must be electrically powered. Fuel powered (propane, kerosene) portable electric heaters that produce open flame are not permitted, unless approved by the Department of Environmental Health and Safety for use at construction sites and/or athletic facilities.

- Portable electric heaters must not take more than 120 volts of electricity to operate.
- Any portable electric heater used must be currently UL (Underwriters Laboratory) approved for its intended use.
- Approved portable electric heaters must be fan driven. Portable electric heaters with exposed heating elements are not permitted.
- Portable electric heaters must have a thermostat that automatically shuts down the unit when a certain temperature is reached.
- Portable electric heaters must have a low center of gravity and a tip-over shutdown feature. If a portable electric heater is knocked over, the unit must automatically shut off.
- Portable electric heaters should always be plugged into a wall receptacle. They should never be plugged into an extension cord. Heaters must be monitored when in operation.
- Portable electric heaters must not have worn or damaged electrical cords, and the plugs must be in good condition. Do not operate a portable electric heater with a damaged electrical cord.
- Portable electric heaters must be inspected frequently (i.e., on a weekly basis) by the user to ensure that they are in good working condition.
- Portable electric heaters must always be turned off and unplugged when the area being heated is not occupied and at the end of each business day. When unplugging heater, pull by the plug and not the cord.
- Portable electric heaters should be located in plain sight and clearly visible.
- Portable electric heaters must be kept at least 3 feet (36 inches) away from all combustible materials (e.g., file cabinets, trash cans, paper boxes, curtains, etc.) and in a well-ventilated area. Portable electric heaters shall not be placed underneath desks, in any means of egress (exit path), or in any high traffic area.
- Nothing shall be placed on top of or touching a portable electric heater.
- Portable electric heaters must not be used in areas where gasoline, paint, or flammable liquids are stored.

- Do not use portable electric heaters or other electrical appliances in bathrooms, laundry areas or other areas where water is present.
- Hot plates and toaster ovens should never be used for portable electric heating. The use of candles, incense and oil lamps are not permitted on campus. Open flames are only permitted in laboratories and kitchen facilities under proper supervision.
- If a portable electric heater trips a circuit breaker, advise the Office of Facilities Management immediately.
- The Roger Williams University Department of Environmental Health & Safety reserves the right to inspect and declare "unapproved" any portable electric heater that creates a hazard or is inappropriate to a particular location based on specific circumstances, or code and/or legal requirements.

Questions regarding this policy or about whether a portable electric heater meets the above requirements should be directed to the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at 401.254.3189.

Adopted as an official University Policy
by the University's Senior Staff on 11/12/2008

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