Overview
The use of portable space heaters has been known to cause fires and presents an increased risk to building occupants. Therefore, the use of portable space heaters as a permanent source of heat is prohibited. However, portable space heaters may be used as a temporary measure during times of extreme cold, when primary building heating systems cannot provide adequate levels of comfort for building occupants. The specifications and conditions under which portable space heaters may be used are contained in this Update.

Applicability
This Update applies to all personnel and outside contractors who use portable space heaters at WCMC.

Responsibilities
Building Occupants are responsible for following the guidelines and restrictions outlined in this Update, and for dressing accordingly during times of extreme cold temperatures.

Engineering and Maintenance (E&M) is responsible for investigating complaints of inadequate heat from building occupants.

Laboratory Personnel are responsible for ensuring that portable space heaters are not used in laboratory areas.

Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) Staff and Contractors are responsible for following the guidelines contained in this update.

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) acts as a resource to WMC personnel by providing technical assistance and guidance on portable space heater use.

Procedure
Occupants who have a heat complaint in buildings that are serviced by E&M should submit a work order via the Maintenance Express website at http://maintenanceexpress.med.cornell.edu or by calling (212) 746-2288. Occupants in all other buildings should contact their building management office to resolving heat complaints.

Once the work order is received, E&M will:

1. Take temperature readings in the area to determine if temperature falls within American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) acceptable comfort range for winter months (68 deg F – 75 deg F).
2. If the temperature is below acceptable range, determine if it can be adjusted to provide additional heat.
3. If not, determine if the system requires repair or upgrade.

ACCEPTABLE AND PROHIBITED TYPES OF PORTABLE SPACE HEATERS
Space heaters that operate using radiant heat (those with exposed heating elements) are prohibited from use at WCM. This type of space heater is designed to radiate heat directly at a person or object. This radiation can directly transfer heat to combustible material such as draperies and furnishings and is a major fire risk.

Acceptable space heaters operate using convection (radiator type oil filled heaters), heating the air in the room and consequently raise the room temperature.
RESTRICTIONS

1. Space heaters are not permitted in laboratories or clinical areas other than administrative or office space.
2. Gas, oil, kerosene or other fossil fuel burning space heaters are prohibited. The use of kerosene space heaters is illegal in New York City.
3. Space heaters with electrical cords which are damaged or frayed including spliced, taped, or exposed wires and connections are prohibited from use.
4. The use of extension cords is prohibited.
5. Space heaters must be placed at least 3 feet from any combustible material such as paper, draperies, furnishings, etc.
6. Placing items or displaying items on space heaters is prohibited.

SAFETY FEATURES AND SPECIFICATIONS

Space heaters must:

1. Not exceed 1500 watts.
2. Contain a tip over shut-off feature and overheat thermal cutoff.
3. Have a working built-in thermostat and timer.
4. Be convection type (see example of approved unit above).

SAFE PLACEMENT AND OPERATION

- Locate in open area which is clearly visible and away from exits.
- Plug directly into a grounded wall receptacle.
- Turn-off and disconnect when not in use. Timer must be set to shut off before you leave for the day.
- Allow heaters to cool before storing.
- Maintain in good working condition.
- Check daily for damaged electric cords and dirty heater elements which can overheat and cause a fire. Damaged space heaters must be turned off, disconnected immediately and removed from service.

DISPOSAL

Contact EHS to dispose of damaged space heaters. Space heaters should not be disposed of as regular waste.

References

FDNY Bureau of Fire Prevention.