



SafetyWorks!
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Use Kerosene Heaters Safely

I. What are the dangers of using kerosene heaters?

In winter many Maine workplaces use portable kerosene heaters for extra heat and during power outages. Byproducts from burning kerosene can cause difficulty breathing and other health concerns, especially for people with heart and lung problems. Kerosene heaters can also cause fire or explosion if not used correctly.

II. What are the safety measures?

- Use only UL listed heaters.
- Use only water-clear K-1 grade kerosene:
 - Never use gasoline. Even small amounts of gasoline or other fuels or solvents mixed with kerosene can cause a fire or an explosion.
 - Store kerosene in a separate kerosene container, not in a gasoline can or a can that has contained gasoline. Kerosene containers are usually blue; gasoline containers are usually red.
- Refueling:
 - Let the heater cool at least 15 minutes before refueling. Do not refuel when the heater is hot.
 - Refill heater and store kerosene outdoors.
 - Never overfill a heater. Leave space above the "full" mark for the fuel to expand.
- Reduce exposure to indoor air pollutants:
 - Follow manufacturer's instructions: Set the wick at the proper level and keep the wick clean. Clean the unit, clean off soot and carbon, inspect for fuel leaks, and follow all cleaning and maintenance recommendations.

- Use only in well-ventilated areas. Keep an outside window or door open, especially in new or winterized buildings.
- Prevent fire and explosion:
- Keep the heater at least 36 inches from combustible materials, such as wood, fabric, and paper.
- Do not use flammable solvents, aerosol sprays, paints, or lacquers near the heater.
- Keep the heater out of the traffic flow.

III. What about emergencies?

- Have an evacuation route and practice using it. Keep the route clear.
- Install and maintain a smoke detector.
- In case of flare-up or uncontrolled flaming, do not try to move the heater. If the heater has a manual shut-off switch, use it. If this does not put the fire out, leave the building immediately and call the fire department.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has safety information about kerosene heaters and other equipment.
<http://www.cpsc.gov/>

For more information about this and other workplace safety and health topics, contact:
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