

Tailgate talk

Today's Subject:

Portable heaters

Date: _____

When we use portable heaters, we probably don't think too much about safety. But we should.

After all, these devices can cause fires when nearby combustible materials are ignited, as well as burn injuries when someone accidentally touches one.

What to focus on

Here are three things to keep in mind to avoid incidents related to portable heaters.

1. Inspect the heater before using it. Check for damage to the unit's parts, knobs, coils and legs. If you notice any problems, take the device out of service and make sure everyone knows not to use it.

2. Position the unit safely. Make sure the heater is placed on a hard, level surface away from doorways and other high-traffic areas. Rule of thumb: Locate heaters at least 3 feet from furniture, packing materials, wood and other combustibles. Be sure to position electric heaters away from water sources that could create a shock hazard.

3. Don't forget the power source. Plug the device into a properly grounded outlet; don't use an extension cord. If you must plug the unit into an extension cord, at least make sure the cord has a power rating as high as that of the heater itself.