



Space Heater Guidance for Use Outside the Measured Child Care Space

Winter COVID-19 Screening

As Pennsylvania enters the coldest part of winter, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has received questions about the use of portable outdoor heaters during the traditional drop-off hours. As a strategy to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, OCDEL advised child care providers to establish daily screening procedures outside the facility, when possible.

Child care centers are not permitted to use space heaters within the measured child care space. Measured space includes outdoor space during the periods of the day when that space is used for children's program activities.

If child care centers choose to use portable heaters during drop-off COVID-19 screening, that area cannot simultaneously be used for children's activities.

Review additional regulations regarding use of space heaters in 55 Pa. Code Chapter §3280.92 and §3290.92

OCDEL has gathered some helpful tips/considerations to ensure safety.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) general guidelines to stay safe this winter:

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Have a three-foot kid-free zone around open fires and space heaters.
- Never use your oven as a heat source.
- Have heating equipment cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- Remember to turn off portable heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Always use the correct fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel-burning space heaters.
- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not light the appliance! Leave the home immediately and call your local fire department or gas company.

Some additional tips from the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), a division of U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are:

- Place space heaters on a solid, flat surface; keep them at least three feet from things that can burn
- Check your space heater for cracked or damaged cords and plugs;
- Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets, don't use an extension cord or power strip
- Only use portable heaters from a recognized testing laboratory
- Make sure portable heaters have an automatic shut-off, so if it tips over, it shuts off
- Refuel your cooled heater outside