



Carnegie Mellon University

Environmental Health & Safety

FIRE | LAB | WORK

Cold Weather Fire Safety

When it gets cold outside, we rely on equipment that generates heat to help keep us warm. Unfortunately, many fatal fires have occurred when this equipment is not used or maintained properly.

Best Practices

- Keep combustible materials at least 3 feet away from all heat sources including space heaters, fireplaces and radiators.
- Space heaters should never be left on or plugged in when unattended.
- Only plug electric space heaters into a wall outlet, never an extension cord or power strip. Only purchase space heaters with “tip over protection” and a safety label from an approved third-party agency such as the Underwriter’s Laboratories.
- Never use an oven to provide heat during cold weather.
- Submit all requests for the use of recreational fire pits or propane space heaters to Environmental Health and Safety (EHS). These must be approved by EHS prior to use.

Carbon Monoxide

Often called the invisible killer, carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels burn incompletely. These fuels can include, but are not limited to, coal, wood, gasoline, natural gas, propane, methane and oil.

- Fuel-fired heating appliances should never be used indoors unless specifically listed for that use.
- Fireplaces and chimneys should be inspected and cleaned at least once per year.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for dryers, furnaces, stoves and fireplaces are clear of snow build-up.
- Keep fuel-fired generators away from windows, doors, air intakes and vent openings.
- Headache, nausea and drowsiness are symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. If you believe that you have carbon monoxide poisoning, move to an area with fresh air and call CMU PD 724-268-2323 or 911 if you are off campus.

Safety concern, training request, or other inquiry?

Reach out to the **[Environmental Health and Safety Department](#)** today!

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