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Portable Heaters Guidelines/Fire Prevention

CODE COMPLIANCE GUIDELINE

This page outlines the New Jersey State Fire Prevention Code, fire safety requirements and prohibitions related to the operation and storage of portable heating equipment. It does not address open-flame cooking devices, portable outdoor fireplaces, or the installation and maintenance of non-portable heating appliances.

Questions regarding the content of this publication should be directed to the Fire Prevention Bureau at 201-330-2059 during regular office hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

OVERVIEW

The intent of this page is to provide information to help prevent unwanted fires resulting from the unlawful or unsafe operation and/or storage of portable heating equipment. In addition to specifying the regulations prohibiting the operation and storage of portable heaters, fire safety, and precautionary information related to the operation of these devices is provided.

PORTABLE HEATING EQUIPMENT. Portable heating equipment (i.e. portable heaters) may be generally defined as portable, purpose-built equipment designed to safely warm the air in an enclosed area or open area in proximity to the heater. Portable heating equipment specifically regulated by the Fire Prevention Code can be separated into three categories:

1. Portable Outdoor Gas-fired Heating Appliances (i.e. patio heaters)
2. Portable Unvented Fuel-Fired Heaters
3. Portable Electric Space Heaters

PORTABLE OUTDOOR GAS-FIRED HEATERS (Patio Heaters)

Section 603.4.2 of the Fire Prevention Code specifically regulated portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances, commonly known as patio heaters. These portable heating appliances are typically configured as a free-standing pole, fashioned with a heater and reflector dome/shield at the top, with a broad base arranged for the storage of a 20-pound propane (LPG) cylinder. These appliances may also be designed to appear and function as portable outdoor fireplaces or tall patio tables.

Appliance Location Restrictions. In accordance with Section 603.4.2.1 of the Fire Prevention Code, portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall be located in accordance with the following regulations:

- **Clearance to Combustible Materials.** Portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall not be located beneath, or closer than 5 feet to combustible decorations and combustible overhangs, awnings, sunshades, or similar combustible attachments to buildings.
- **Clearance to Buildings.** Portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall be located at least 5 feet from buildings.
- **Prohibited Storage or Use.** The storage or use of portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances is prohibited in any of the following locations:
 - Inside of any occupancy when connected to the fuel gas container
 - Inside of tents, canopies and membrane structures
 - On exterior balconies
- **Proximity to Exits.** Portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall not be located within 5 feet of exits or exit discharges.

Installation and Operational Requirements. In accordance with Section 603.4.2.2 of the Fire Prevention Code, portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall be installed and operated in accordance with the following regulations:

- **Listing & Approval.** Only listed and approved portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances utilizing a fuel gas container that is integral to the appliance shall be used.
- **Installation & Maintenance.** Portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall be installed and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Tip-over Switch Required.** Portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall be equipped with a tilt or tip-over switch that automatically shuts off the flow of gas if the appliance is tilted more than 15 degrees from the vertical.
- **Guard Against Contact Required.** The heating element or combustion chamber of portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall be permanently guarded to prevent accidental contact by persons or material.

Fuel Gas Containers. In accordance with Section 603.4.2.3 of the Fire Prevention Code, fuel gas containers for portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall comply with the following:

- **Approved Containers.** Only approved DOTn or ASME gas containers shall be used.

- **Container Replacement Restriction.** Replacement of fuel gas containers in portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall not be conducted while the public is present.
- **Container Capacity Limitation.** The maximum individual capacity of gas containers used in connection with portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances shall not exceed 20 pounds.
- **Prohibited Storage of Containers.** Gas containers shall not be stored inside of buildings, or in any location near exit access doors, exits, stairways, or areas normally used, or intended to be used, as a means of egress. Containers not connected for use shall not be stored on roofs.
- **Outside Storage of Containers.** Gas containers approved for outside storage shall be located in a manner that minimizes exposure to excessive temperature rise, physical damage, and/or tampering, which includes a lockable, ventilated metal cabinet or other approved enclosure.

PORTABLE ELECTRIC SPACE HEATERS

General Regulations. In accordance with Section 605.10 of the Fire Prevention Code, where not prohibited by others sections of the Fire Prevention Code, portable electric space heaters shall not be permitted to be used in all occupancies other than Group I-2 (i.e. hospitals, nursing homes, certain daycare centers, etc.) in accordance with the following regulations:

- Shall be listed and labeled in accordance with UL 1278 (605.10.1)
- Shall be installed and maintained in accordance with the listing and instructions (605.7)
- Shall be operated only in locations for which they are listed (605.10.4)
- Shall be plugged directly into an approved receptacle (605.10.2)
- Shall not be plugged into extension cords (605.10.3)
- Shall not be operated within 3 feet of any combustible materials (304.1 & 605.10.4)
- Heating elements shall be permanently guarded so as to prevent accidental contact by persons or material (603.5.1)

Group I-2 Exception. The use of portable, electric space heaters in which the heating element cannot exceed a temperature of 212 F shall be permitted in non-sleeping staff and employee areas in occupancies in Group I-2. (605.10)