

Are Portable Space Heaters Efficient for My Home?

By Abby Berry

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. Unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters in an attempt to heat their entire house, which takes a toll on their energy bills.

Whether you should use space heaters depends on each home's efficiency and energy needs. If you are using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home—such as inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system—space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you are on a tight budget, caulking and weatherstripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy.

Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose-fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot.

Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy efficient but you are cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work.

A good comparison is ceiling fans. We use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces while you occupy them and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater.

If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space. Most heaters include a general sizing table.

A Word About Safety

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths.

If you must use a space heater, buy a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it

carries the Underwriter's Laboratory label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm, such as extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, use area rugs to provide insulation and maintain warmth.

We know it is cold out there, but remember in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

For alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, contact Klickitat PUD Customer Service department at 800-548-8358.

Klickitat PUD is here to help you manage your energy use. ■



TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.

