Is This a Good Place for a Portable Space Heater?

What's wrong with this picture?



Even a blurry photo can't obscure the danger of placing a kerosene heater inches away from fuel containers. Hopefully, the containers are empty; but even if they are, they may emit flammable vapors that heat from the device could cause to ignite. The electrical cord stretching across the floor as a trip wire/additional source of ignition adds insult to injury.

The Moral: Temporary heating devices are a potential ignition source that must be kept a safe distance from flammable and combustible materials like chemicals, wood, paper—and even tarpaulins used to cover the heater.

Portable Space Heaters: What's at Stake

3 Reasons to Pay Attention

Portable space heaters are a leading cause

1. Fires;
2. Explosions; and
3. Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

3 Types of Portable Space Heaters

1. Kerosene Heaters



- Largest and heaviest type
- Use fuel grade kerosene
- Not regulated by a thermostat
- May require use of outside ventilation source to prevent buildup of combustible vapors

2. Electric Heaters



- Lighter, cleaner and quieter than kerosene heaters
- Function like old-style radiator
- Typically have thermostat allowing you to control temperature
- Electric supply and flow potential source of ignition—although most models include automatic shutoff in case of electrical surge or tip over

3. Forced Air Heaters



- Lightest kind of portable heater
- Can run on electric or liquid fuel
- Have thermostat allowing you to control temperature
- Generally most effective in heating a space quickly
- Often also used as fans in hot weather

8 Portable Space Heaters Do's and Don'ts

There are 8 things to do/not do when using portable space heaters at work (or even at home):

- **DO** make sure you keep the heater at least 3 feet away from chemicals and other combustible items—don't ever get into a situation like the one in the photo above
- **DON'T** use a portable space heater without first getting your supervisor's permission
- **DO** make sure the space heater you use has a label indicating that it's been tested by a testing lab like the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL)
- **DON'T** use a light-duty extension cord or multi outlet strip/surge protector with a high wattage electric heater—it might start a fire
- **DO** keep electric heaters plugged directly into the outlet
- **DON'T** place electric heaters in enclosed spaces like bathrooms (unless you get a supervisor's permission)
- **DO** ensure that electric heaters are grounded with a 3-pronged plug

- **DON’T** run the power or extension cord across the floor so that it becomes a trip hazard—the way the cord in the above photo is