THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
MARTIN

UT - Martin Procedure: SA005-M - Portable Space Heaters	
Version: 1	Effective Date: 10/28/2026

1. Objective

The purpose of this guidance is to protect the University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM) community from fire, electrical, injury, and energy hazards associated with portable space heaters. Portable heaters place additional strain on electrical systems, interfere with HVAC system performance, and are a significant cause of workplace fires.

2. Scope

This guidance applies to all faculty, staff, students, contractors, and visitors in all UTM-owned or operated facilities.

3. Policy

Portable space heaters are prohibited in all UTM buildings and facilities.

Portable space heaters are not permitted for personal comfort or supplemental heating under any circumstances unless specifically authorized in writing by Facilities Services or Environmental Health & Safety for temporary operational or emergency purposes.

4. Safety and Energy Concerns

Portable space heaters present significant safety and operational concerns, including:

- Increased risk of fire and personal injury
- Electrical overload hazards
- Excessive energy consumption
- Interference with building HVAC systems and temperature controls

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, portable space heaters are involved in approximately 1,600–1,700 fires annually in the United States. A typical portable heater

operating for 8 hours per day may consume 8–12 kilowatt-hours of electricity, significantly increasing energy costs.

5. Prohibited Equipment

The following devices are prohibited in all UTM facilities:

- Portable electric space heaters
- Open-coil heaters
- Fuel-burning heaters
- Radiant heaters
- Heaters with exposed heating elements
- Heaters producing an open flame

6. Electrical Safety

Portable heaters can overload building electrical circuits and create fire hazards. The use of extension cords, power strips, or surge protectors with heating devices further increases these risks.

7. HVAC and Building Operations

Portable heaters negatively affect building heating and cooling systems by disrupting thermostat operation and causing HVAC systems to operate inefficiently. This can create uneven temperatures throughout buildings and increase operational and energy costs.

8. Reporting Heating Issues

Employees experiencing temperature concerns should submit a work request to Facilities Services so building HVAC issues can be evaluated and corrected appropriately.

9. Enforcement

Departments and individuals are responsible for complying with this guidance. Unauthorized portable space heaters are prohibited in all UTM facilities and must be removed. Non-compliance with this guidance may be addressed through appropriate disciplinary procedures.

10. Additional Information

For questions regarding this guidance, contact:

Director of Physical Plant, Dana Hagan (dhagan@utm.edu) or 731.881.7601

Safety and Emergency Management Coordinator, Charlie Jahr or 731.881.7583

For information regarding requesting a Workplace Accommodation under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) please visit the OACT website

For questions regarding requesting a Requesting a Workplace Accommodation, contact:

Director of Access, Compliance & Title IX, Dominique Ross (oact@utm.edu) or 731.881.3505

11. RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL AND ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

Subject Matter	Office Name	Telephone Number	Email/Web Address
Policy Clarification and Interpretation	Department of Environmental Health and Safety	(731) 881-7583	cjahr@utm.edu