

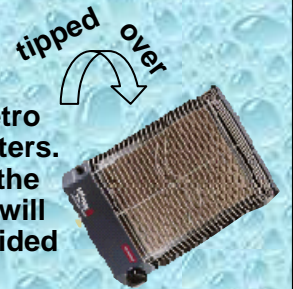


Boats & Portable Heaters

Marine insurance claims files confirm that the leading causes of winter vessel fires are unattended portable heaters and overtaxed electrical systems.

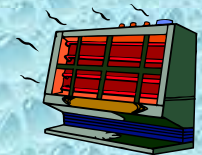
Unattended heaters are easily tipped over by wave movement and other forces.

In one instance, a sailboat owner left his vessel to visit the marina office, only to return minutes later to the boat fully engulfed in flames. A portable radiant heater had become dislodged and ignited the blaze. Relying on a heater's safety tip-over switch leaves little margin for error. The Seattle-Metro area has seen its share of boat fires caused by portable space heaters. Unfortunately, when fire occurs on a boat that is moored under a canopy, the other boats in adjacent slips are put in jeopardy. The flame-engulfed canopy will drop to the boats below, spreading the fire. The structure that once provided protection for boats may now destroy them.



ELECTRIC HEATERS

When purchasing a portable electric heater to use on your boat, buy one that is built for marine use. It's casing is made of stainless steel or aluminum, and it will last longer in the moisture and humidity found around a boat. Marine heaters often have additional safety features designed with boats in mind. Some models are designed with stay-cool housings, reducing the risk of fire from nearby combustible materials. Others have tip-over protection that will shut-off the heater should a wake or other sudden motion knock it over. Look for portable heaters that have a thermostat control, multi-speed fan, and a stable base. Make sure that it has a three-prong safety plug. Operating on AC power limits an electric heater's use to dockside hook-up or running off a generator.



LIQUID FUELED SPACE HEATERS put out lots of heat but must be used only with plenty of ventilation and only occasionally because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Life-safety becomes an overwhelming concern.



FIRE EXTINGUISHER: Purchase a minimum 2A10BC Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher for your boat. Know how to use it in the event it becomes necessary. Inspect it regularly, making sure the gauge arrow is in the charged area. If the seal on an extinguisher is broken or if the pin is missing, the extinguisher must be re-serviced; if the fire extinguisher non-refillable, purchase a new extinguisher.

Choose portable heaters that are approved for marine use.

Use portable boat heaters wisely and safely.

