

know risk

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LPG - Portable gas heaters

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the use of portable LPG heaters within cafés and outdoor eating areas. As a specialist insurer, it is concerning to see a growing usage of these types of heaters within buildings. The two most common types used are the 'mushroom' patio heater and the 'rocket' industrial workshop heater. Both of these heaters are predominantly designed for outdoor use, in open spaces and away from areas of high human traffic. More importantly, many of these devices were designed for industrial purposes and are dangerous in locations where children and elderly people are present.

Potential dangers

Some of the hazards associated with these heaters are:

- Leaking gas which can ignite and explode;
- Radiant heat igniting nearby combustible materials;
- Hot surfaces causing serious burns when touched;
- Poisonous combustion fumes accumulating in enclosed spaces, compromising peoples health and in extreme cases, causing death
- In areas of high public traffic, heaters can be knocked over and may ignite combustible materials.

Employing safe practices

By employing safe practices the risks associated with these heaters can be greatly reduced. Follow these rules:

- Portable LPG heaters are not recommended for indoor use. Fan forced 'rocket' heaters are especially unsuitable for use in churches. The pollutants emitted from these burners breach indoor air quality health guidelines and may seriously affect susceptible people. Consider replacing portable LPG heaters with fixed permanent installations.

- Position heaters in well ventilated areas, on stable ground and away from combustible materials, ceilings, awnings or flammable liquids (at least 1 metre)
- Service all heaters in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and at least every 2 years.
- Regularly check appliances, hoses and cylinder connections for leaks.
- Allow heaters and associated equipment to cool down before storage in confined spaces and prior to changing cylinders.

This material is for information purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice nor are any suggestions, checklists or action plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions.

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