

The University of Akron EOHS Safety Newsletter

Safety Spotlight: Space Heaters

While the Spring semester may be heating up, winter weather conditions are expected to bring ample snow and low temperatures. Here are some reminders about the safe use of space heaters in campus buildings and offices:

- Space heaters are not permitted in laboratories containing flammable solvents or chemicals, even if those chemicals are in storage. Space heaters generally do not contain an open flame (due to carbon monoxide risks), but even electric heating elements can get hot enough to ignite combustible materials or vapors.
- The three foot rule:** Always keep at least 36 inches of clearance around every space heater. This is especially important if combustible materials, such as paper, cardboard, synthetic cloth, or wooden items are kept in the same vicinity as the heater.
- Space heaters must have a “UL Listed” sticker on the casing, which ensures that the model conforms to safety standards for fire and electric shock risks. This certification often verifies other safety measures, such as automatic shut-off in case the device tips over.



- Space heaters must be plugged directly into a wall receptacle and are not permitted to be plugged into a power strip or extension cord, which are major fire risks. Power strips are not designed to handle the high current flow needed for a space heater and can overheat or catch fire. There are many reports of residential and commercial fires being caused by heating equipment which overloaded a multi-outlet power strip.
- Space heaters should be placed and operated on the floor. Do not place space heaters on tables, cabinets, or other unstable surfaces from which the device could tip or fall.



Seasonal Reminder: Slip, Trip, and Fall Hazards

As students return to campus, slip, trip, and fall hazards due to ice and snow accumulation return as well. Researchers and workers are reminded to exercise increased caution in hallways and near entrances or exits to buildings. Individuals transporting samples, equipment, or chemicals within or between buildings should use a cart with raised edges or a bottle carrier to mitigate the risk of a spill if a fall occurs. Students, staff, and faculty are encouraged to report hazardous conditions to PFOC (330-972-7415) and report slips, trips, and falls to EOHS (330-972-6866 or use this link). Hazardous conditions could include icy areas needing salt or footpath obstructions.



Setting Sights on SciShield Inventories and Contact Information

SciShield is an essential tool that enables research groups to track chemical inventories (including time-sensitive chemicals), manage their laboratory spaces, and produce door signs with vital contact information. This research tool enables compliance with several hazard communication and inventory requirements that are needed for emergency responders and building code regulations. Research groups that have out-of-date chemical inventories or that lack door signs are subject to unannounced drop-in laboratory inspections. Contact asm97@uakron.edu or mad151@uakron.edu for SciShield assistance.



SciShield

EPA Trichloroethylene (TCE) Rule Updates

The EPA has published a prohibition on the use of TCE for a variety of uses, including distribution in commerce and industrial/commercial uses. If you cannot eliminate TCE from your laboratory procedures, [contact EOHS immediately](#). The compliance deadline for WCPP implementation is February 17, 2026. [Link to EPA compliance guide](#)

Laboratory Waste Pickup Form

Are your laboratory waste containers getting full? Be sure to submit a [Waste Pickup Request](#) and have them replaced! EOHS will remove the full waste containers and replace them accordingly with empty flammable or aqueous 5-gallon drums. Contact Dr. Mike DeBord (mad151@uakron.edu) with specific waste questions.