

Portable Electric Space Heaters

Using a portable electric space heater is one of the most expensive ways to heat your home. At today's prices, electric heat costs at least twice as much per BTU as natural gas. If electricity didn't cost more than gas for heating, we'd all heat with electricity. **You will not save money using an electric space heater unless you turn your central heating system down many degrees and use a space heater to warm just a small area.**

Types of heaters

Convection – Most portable electric space heaters rely on the movement of air to warm a room.



Radiant – Some heaters warm people and objects in their path through infrared radiation. This can provide comfort at a

lower air temperature than a convection heater since you can avoid heating an entire room. It is practical only if you stay in one spot during its use.



Safety is most important

All electric space heaters carry a safety risk. For your safety, please follow these guidelines.

- Turn off when not in the room or when sleeping.
- Only buy a unit with a tip-over safety switch, which automatically shuts off the heater if the unit is tipped over.
- Avoid contact with the heating element in an electric heater. Fabric can catch fire or you can burn your skin. Keep all materials at least 3 feet away.
- Install smoke detectors in the rooms where space heaters will be used.

- Space heaters can trip a circuit breaker or blow a fuse. If this happens repeatedly, try using a different outlet or contact your electrician.
- Never use an electric heater with a common household extension cord.
- Locate the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic. Be especially careful to keep children and pets away from the heater.
- Only buy Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) approved heaters

Cost to use

For any electrical device, the cost per hour of use depends on the wattage of the device. A typical electric space heater:

- Uses 1,500 watts.
- Produces 5,120 BTUs of heat per hour.
- Costs 19 cents (at \$0.125 per kilowatt-hour) for 5,120 BTUs.

An 80% efficient natural gas furnace will cost just \$0.066 to produce those same 5,120 BTUs of heat (at \$1.03 per therm of natural gas).

Beware of claims too good to be true

All portable electric heaters are the same efficiency, no matter how fancy the cabinet. We strongly suggest that you check them out through an independent testing agency such as Consumer Reports.

For more information

Call MGE's Home Energy Line and talk with our energy experts at (608) 252-7117.

US DOE Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy - <http://tinyurl.com/aljn3g>

Consumer Reports - <http://tinyurl.com/bg5n8t>

Energy Myths - <http://tinyurl.com/ckf2vc>

Madison Fire Department - <http://micurl.com/ipbaem>