



City and Borough of Sitka

Electric Department

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Are Plug-in Portable Electric Heaters efficient?

The answer is yes. A portable electric heater is just as efficient as a permanently installed electric heater. Both are considered to be 100% efficient as all of the electric energy consumed by an electric heater is released into the heated space. The same statement, incidentally, also applies to lighting or appliances that release heat into your house, even your refrigerator. An incandescent light bulb is essentially an electric heater that gives off light.

The major concern with plug-in heaters is safety. A plug-in portable heater is inherently more hazardous than a permanently wired electric baseboard heater. Plug-in heaters should only be used in wiring systems that are in good condition. A poor connection at the plug-in due to a worn outlet will cause heat build-up that could start a fire. Frayed or broken insulation on cords pose electric shock as well as tripping and fire hazards. An automatic tip-over shut-off is a good safety feature for a portable heater. Plug-in portable heaters should only be used temporarily. They are not designed for long-term use. If the heating need is long term then permanently wired electric heaters should be installed in accordance with the National Electric Code.

By: Charlie Walls, Utility Director

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