

Kerosene heaters are safe, but

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By Penny Wright
special writer

IS THE unvented portable kerosene heater safe? "Yes, but..." is the answer frequently heard.

The State Fire Marshal's office just released a report detailing accidents involving unvented portable heaters during the 1984-85 heating season. Ten incidents occurred with fire and smoke damage costs estimated at over \$100,000. No fatalities were reported.

Noting that the number of incidents is based on voluntary information reported by fire departments around the state, Lt. Art Nash of the State Police Fire Marshal Division is cautious about endorsing the use of kerosene heaters.

"We don't encourage their use," said Nash. "A tested and labeled vented heater is better. If used properly, the kerosene heater is OK, but you are increasing the fire hazard."

MICHIGAN STATE University professor Howard Does is equally cautious about the low-accident profile of portable kerosene usage around the state.

While Does is pleased there aren't more documented cases of heater accidents, he can't stop worrying about unvented heater users. "I am concerned about the person who replaces central heating with a kerosene heater. Or the person who uses the heater while asleep or while living in a multiple-family dwelling unit."

Does, a faculty member of the MSU Agricultural Engineering Department,



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first became concerned about kerosene heaters in the early 1980s. He discovered a lot of people in rural areas, intent on reducing heating bills, were doing risky things with the popular energy saving devices.

IN 1982, Does' department along with the MSU Cooperative Extension Service issued a bulletin listing safety and use considerations for portable

kerosene heaters. The hazards listed included: increased potential for home fire if placed too close to combustibles, increased potential for personal burns, and harmful health effects of breathing carbon monoxide and other combustion gases.

Does thinks his efforts have made a difference in how people use the heaters, at least in the quality of fuel used. "The top grade of kerosene (1-K) is more available now than it ever was. Kerosene other than 1-K grade is not designed for use inside homes. 1-K grade kerosene is more refined and reduces the health risk by having a lower sulphur content."

DOSS SAID that the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission based in Washington, D.C., issued a list of 17

safety rules in 1984 for using and maintaining kerosene heaters. He noted a new bulletin the commission issued in October 1985 increased the safety rules to 24.

"What does that tell you about the product?" asked Does.

The professor summarized his thoughts about kerosene heater usage: "Buying a portable kerosene heater is like getting a puppy for Christmas. It's fine, but you have to know what you're getting into — special maintenance, supervision and risks."

Copies of Extension Bulletin E-1669, "Some Considerations About Portable Kerosene Heaters," may be obtained by contacting the Cooperative Extension Service, MSU, E. Lansing, Mich. 48824.

OU offers new med-tech degree

Oakland University is cooperating with Palcor Inc. of Brighton to offer a new bachelor's degree in perfusion technology.

The program will train students to operate the circulation equipment needed in any operation where it is necessary to support or replace a patient's circulatory or respiratory functions, such as open heart surgery.

The OU Board of Trustees approved the program Nov. 13 with implementa-

tion subject to the approval of the president. The Brighton firm is the nation's largest contract perfusion group.

The program will be offered under auspices of the School of Health Sciences. Currently, the only perfusion technology training in Michigan is a certificate program at Harper-Grace Hospital.

OU STUDENTS will take a health science core curriculum and general education courses at the university then undertake the professional portion

of their training. Students will spend one year of advanced science study plus 12 weeks of perfusion technology lecture and laboratory courses and one year of clinical education. The year of clinical education will consist of four 12-week rotations through clinical sites staffed by Palcor personnel in hospitals in Michigan and other states.

The university would expect to enroll 16 to 24 students in the first class, possibly in the fall 1986.

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