

Safety Guide to Propane Patio Heater Use

Propane patio heaters extend the life of your open-air get-togethers, keeping you comfortable in cooler weather and providing ambiance and warmth on chilly days or nights so you can experience endless backyard enjoyment. To get the most from your patio heater it's important to understand its *safe* use. Proper patio heater safety measures mean peace of mind while welcoming a new day with a warming cup of aromatic java, a relaxing afternoon cup of your favorite tea, or delightful toddy on the chilliest of evenings, right in the comfort of your backyard. This guide will help ensure you enjoy your outdoor space all year long -- *safely*.

What Propane Patio Heater Is Best for You? The right choice should always include safety considerations. A patio heater's heat capacity and fuel efficiency in relation to your outdoor space should be top of mind. Consider units which emit around 5,000 BTUs per each 100 square feet. From there, many styles and models are available like compact tabletop patio heaters perfect for smaller outdoor spaces; stylish domed heaters; or in vogue pyramid-shaped heaters -- all from modern stainless models to classic brushed copper and enamel-painted options. Other style considerations include portable versus stationary (with or without wheels).

Must-Have Safety Features. Patio heaters are designed with a range of safety features to help prevent injury and fire hazards from occurring. The following safety features should be considered when purchasing a patio heater.

Safety Rating. Ensure there is a CSA (Compliance Safety Accountability) rating. This means the unit has undergone and met a rigorous set of standards and approved as safe for use in the USA.

Anti-Tip Feature. This feature reduces the risk of your heater from tipping or tilting over. It's a common feature especially in floor-standing models. Some higher-end heaters even come with a switch that automatically shuts off the burner if it senses the heater falling over. Choose a unit that contains at least this feature. Other safety features to look for include an oxygen depletion sensor (ODS) and an overflow protection device (OPD).

Contain the Flame. Though commercial venues like bars and restaurants frequently display beautiful heaters with open flame, they can pose a threat to private residences. To reduce the risk of a fire while using a patio heater, it's best to look for a residential patio heater where the flames are contained within an emitter or tempered glass.

Thermocouple Feature. A thermocouple is an essential sensor feature which measures temperature. Responding to changes in temperature, it will shut off the gas valve if the flame extinguishes (often due to high winds) and prevents gas leaks.

Safety Considerations After Your Purchase

Now that you've selected a patio heater that works with your space, surroundings and includes the necessary safety features, it's time to address the factors that will help you enjoy and use it safely for years to come. Placement considerations include:

- Foot traffic - adults, children and pets
- Clearance around the heater
- Transporting/relocating
- Stabilization
- Fueling Your Propane Patio Heater

- Protection Against the Elements

Patio Heaters, Pets and Kids. Only household adults familiar with the heater's manufacturer instructions should operate the heater. Adults with children should set safety rules and limits to the area surrounding the patio heater where children and pets can pass. Don't put your patio heater in a high-traffic area where children or pets can accidentally knock it over, potentially causing injury to both person and unit. And never leave a patio heater running unattended, especially when children or pets are present.

Placement & Clearance. Certain materials may become a fire hazard if the heater is too close. Patio heaters are for outdoor use only. Make sure yours has appropriate clearance -- from side to side and top to bottom. No patio heater should be placed near combustible materials, plants and grass (including potted or planters), fabrics and cloth, gas tanks, lighter fluid, etc. If you want to put your patio heater on the lawn, invest in a firm and fire-proof surface so the heater remains stable and can't potentially fall over. Always follow the manufacturer's directions for distancing, usually at a minimum of three feet.

Relocating Patio Heaters. Whenever possible, have someone help you transport the heater from one place to another, even if it's just a few feet away. This pertains to portable patio heaters as well since all patio heater styles, whether portable or stand alone, can be awkward to handle. You risk injury moving a unit by yourself. And never move a patio heater while the flame is open which can create a fire hazard.

Stabilization. Though your patio heater should have the anti-tip feature, taking added precautions of securing and bracing the unit with stabilizers like weights, fire-resistance fasteners or sandbags is always a good idea.

Fueling Your Propane Patio Heater. Propane patio heaters are highly popular due to their convenience and portability. When your patio heater isn't in use, close the propane tank's valve and turn the heater's switch off. Regularly inspect all valves and hoses for leaks. It's easy to check for air bubbles by applying soapy water to these areas then wiping dry afterward. Don't use the unit until any leak issues have been resolved. Store spare propane tanks away from heat or open flames.

Protecting Your Patio Heater Against the Elements. Most patio heaters have some weather-resistant coating, but wind is your patio heater's worst enemy. Especially prone to wind are domed heaters, acting as umbrellas and catching wind. Whenever possible, the heater should be placed in non-windy areas. This will not only be more comfortable for your guests, but will help in fuel efficiency since the unit won't work as hard defending against active winds. If this isn't possible, anchor your patio heater with stabilizers like weights.

Always follow your patio heater manufacturer's instructions for care and maintenance to ensure you get the most out of your unit. Patio heaters are robust and built to last. In the event your heater isn't working properly, it is damaged or if parts are missing, contact the manufacturer who will help you locate an authorized technician to appropriately assess and fix the problem. During your regular maintenance, ensure all parts are functioning properly, especially the pilot light, emitters and reflectors. Key maintenance and care considerations include:

- Cleaning and disassembly/reassembly
- Long-term storage

Cleaning. A mild soapy water solution and soft pad or sponge can be used to clean the emitter. Try not to get the burner wet. A Q-tip or soft cloth dipped in rubbing alcohol can be used to clean up around that area. The rubbing alcohol helps to clean up grease and dry simultaneously. Check for blockages or debris by disconnecting the gas line and removing the cover in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. These areas can easily be cleaned up with a pipe cleaner.



Long-term storage: If you're storing the unit for long periods, remember that dust, debris, insects and rodents can make their way into the unit and its components. Consider storage areas that will discourage rust, tarnishing, and environments that may lead to rubber hosing becoming brittle.

If you aren't experienced with gas lines, have concerns about dismantling your unit, or are uncertain about how the various components operate, contact the manufacturer who will help you locate an authorized dealer for assistance and instruction on your patio heater's care and maintenance needs for the many seasons of safe enjoyment ahead.

Patio heaters are a perfect addition to your backyard, extending outdoor enjoyment all year long. Need more help choosing a patio heater? Ask us. And once your patio heater is up and running, let Paraco keep the outdoor party going with propane refills and canisters. [Contact Us](#) today for details.