

LP Gas heaters for outdoor use including public spaces

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Introduction

Gas heating has become very popular with the rapid expansion of outdoor facilities associated with hotels, restaurants, cafes etc, and there is a growing trend towards portable heaters.

Occasionally, heaters are located in public places, including footpaths, and there are some safety concerns ranging from the stability of the heaters to them becoming an obstruction for the disabled.

This information sheet provides guidance for those selecting or installing an outdoor gas heating source. In addition to the gas safety aspects, local councils may have some requirements, including the need for planning approval.

General Safety

- Operation or relocation of a heater in a public place by members of the public should not be permitted. Any form of gas heating in a public place should be supervised appropriately.
- The use of portable LPG Gas cylinders in public places should be avoided unless properly safeguarded and supervised. Where cylinders are used, they must be located at least 1 metre from a doorway.
- When deciding which type of heater is most appropriate, the likelihood of accidental damage, theft and vandalism should be considered.
- Whether the heater is purchased or hired, it is important to ensure that it has been certified by an Australian recognised gas appliance certifier, i.e the Australian Gas Association (AGA), Standards Australia International (SAI) Global, International Association of Plumbing Mechanical Organisation (IAPMO). The certification number is usually on the data plate. Be aware that the certification may only cover the actual heater and not any associated mounting frame or fixing method.
- The installation and operating instructions must be followed. There are three popular ways of providing outdoor heating, these being mobile air heaters, radiant panel heaters and patio heaters.

Mobile air heaters

Although primarily designed for use in industrial premises, mobile air heaters (or 'jet heaters') are often hired out for heating temporary structures such as marquees. They are normally supplied from 9kg LPG Gas cylinders. Care must be taken to ensure that the heater and the cylinder are located safely, and that the flexible hose and its connections are in good condition.

Heaters must be placed well away from combustibles, and it is essential that plenty of ventilation is available. As these heaters are floor based, particular care must be taken to avoid causing burns to persons, especially where children or the elderly will be present.

Radiant panel heaters

The preferred method of installation for these heaters is that they be fixed to a non-combustible structure at least 2.5 metres from the ground, and have a permanent gas supply, either reticulated or from fixed cylinders.

For temporary or portable use, radiant panel heaters are often fixed to a frame which also holds a 45 kg gas cylinder. Such frames should be trolley-mounted for mobility and security. To meet the recommended height requirements, some frames require extending prior to the heater being used. For safety reasons there should always be at least 500mm between the heater and the cylinder.

Wherever possible, portable radiant panel heaters should be placed against a wall so that they do not create a hazard or obstruction. When selecting a location, check that any combustible materials above the heater, such as canvas awnings, are well clear (approx. 1 metre) or adequately protected.

Patio heaters

Most installation aspects applicable to radiant panel heaters apply also to patio heaters. However, because patio heaters provide radiant heat throughout 360°, they need to be located in a more open area.

The preferred method of installation is to securely fix the base of the patio heater to the ground and provide a permanent gas supply. Patio heaters can also be pole-mounted with a weighted base and a 9kg LPG Gas cylinder, or trolley-mounted for temporary situations. Where a patio heater cannot be permanently fixed, care should be taken to select a location not susceptible to disturbance. Avoid sloping or unstable surfaces. Be aware that the stability of unsecured heaters will reduce as the cylinder empties.

Contact the Office of the Technical Regulator for more information

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South Australia**