

No heat, and using a space heater safely

Easy · 15 min · Free; a space heater if you need one

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Your landlord's repair or emergency contact
- ☐ Your phone, for photos and a thermometer reading
- ☐ A space heater that shuts off if it tips over

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 Check the simple stuff first.** Is the thermostat set to heat and turned up? Batteries in it? Breaker tripped? If you have a gas furnace and smell gas, leave and call the gas company from outside.
- 2 Tell your landlord in writing today.** Photos, dated written repair requests, and how long the problem has lasted are what California's tenant guide says to keep.
- 3 Know heat is a must.** California lists heating facilities in good working order as part of a habitable home. New York counts a lack of regular heat as a breach of a tenant's right to a livable home.
- 4 Know if your city sets numbers.** In New York City, from October 1 to May 31, it must be at least 68°F inside from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. when it's below 55°F outside, and at least 62°F overnight no matter the weather. Tenants report problems to 311.
- 5 Pick a safe space heater.** Look for one that shuts off automatically if it falls over, and set it on a level, hard, nonflammable surface.
- 6 Keep it 3 feet from anything that can burn: curtains, bedding, furniture, clothes.** Plug it straight into a wall outlet, not an extension cord or power strip, as the CPSC video below says.
- 7 Turn it off when you leave the room or go to bed.** Space heaters are in about 30% of home heating fires but about 73% of the deaths.
- 8 Never heat with the oven.** Never run a generator, grill or camp stove inside; generators go outdoors, away from doors, windows and vents.

Watch out Carbon monoxide has no smell. Fuel-burning heaters and furnaces that aren't working or vented right can produce it, so have a CO alarm outside each sleeping area and on every level. If it goes off, get outside and call 911.

DAD NOTE *Report it in writing the first day, and treat that space heater like a campfire: never close to anything, never left alone.*

Full lesson: apkeys.com/your-place/when-something-goes-wrong/no-heat-and-using-a-space-heater-safely/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: California Department of Real Estate; New York Attorney General; NYC Housing Preservation and Development; National Fire Protection Association; U.S. Fire Administration; American Red Cross.