

Safety

Winter 1990-1991

& THE LAW

A Newsletter to live by from the law firm of **ROBERTS & ROBERTS**

Table of Contents

- ◆ **Space Heaters Require Caution**
- ◆ **Family Safety Update**
(Page 2)
Automatic Garage Doors
- ◆ **Law Update**
(Page 2)
Changes in the Workers' Compensation Laws
- ◆ **Workplace Safety Update**
(Page 3)
Step up to Ladder Safety
- ◆ **Consumer Product Warnings & Recalls**
(Page 4)
Check this Listing of Potential Problem Products

Space Heaters Require Caution

Every year thousands of people are injured and hundreds die as a result of space heaters.

Fires, carbon monoxide poisoning, and burns can occur when space heaters are used improperly.

For many people who do not have central heating systems, the space heater offers the only warmth on the coldest days. Choosing the proper unit, ventilating the room, and making sure the unit is away from potentially flammable materials are necessary steps to reduce the risk of accidents.

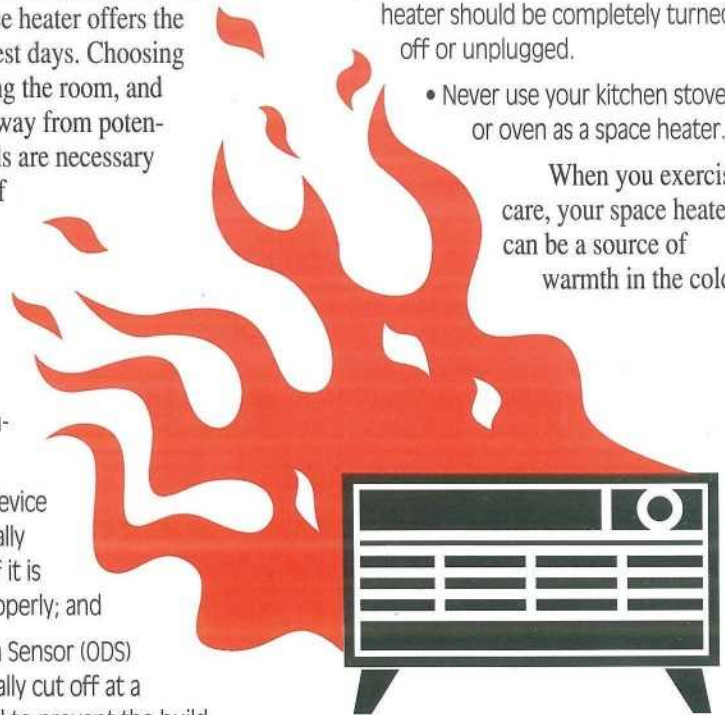
Some important safety features to look for include:

- Certification by the American Gas Association Laboratory;
- A thermal shut-off device which will automatically shut the heater off if it is not being vented properly; and
- An Oxygen Depletion Sensor (ODS) which will automatically cut off at a reduced oxygen level to prevent the build-up of carbon monoxide.

Portable space heaters that are properly certified and maintained may be operated safely if the following steps are remembered:

- Always read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels before operating a heater.
- Space heaters are not dryers for damp clothes. All combustible items should be at least three feet away from the heater. Fire hazards include bedding, drapes, clothes, paper, furniture, and other flammables.
- Space heaters should only be used on the floor and never placed on counter tops or furniture.
- Operate a portable heater only when there are people in the room. An unattended heater should be completely turned off or unplugged.
- Never use your kitchen stove or oven as a space heater.

When you exercise care, your space heater can be a source of warmth in the cold.



ROBERTS & ROBERTS

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

118 W. Fourth St.
Tyler, TX 75701

(903) 597-6000
1-800-248-6000

Doors Can Deal A Crushing Blow

Automatic garage door openers are a great convenience. If they are not properly designed or used, however, they can represent one of the most deadly appliances in your home.

Since 1982 at least 46 children have died and many others injured while playing around automatic garage door openers. Caution in selecting and operating these modern conveniences is necessary for your family's safety.

Most deaths from automatic garage door openers occur when a door fails to automatically reverse after it strikes a person. Because of the weight of the door and the force exerted by the automatic opener, an object can be crushed before the door stops.

Manufacturers are just now realizing the need for stronger standards to ensure the safety of these automatic openers. In September of 1990 Underwriters Laboratories held a conference to discuss voluntary standards to improve the automatic reverse safety features of the product.

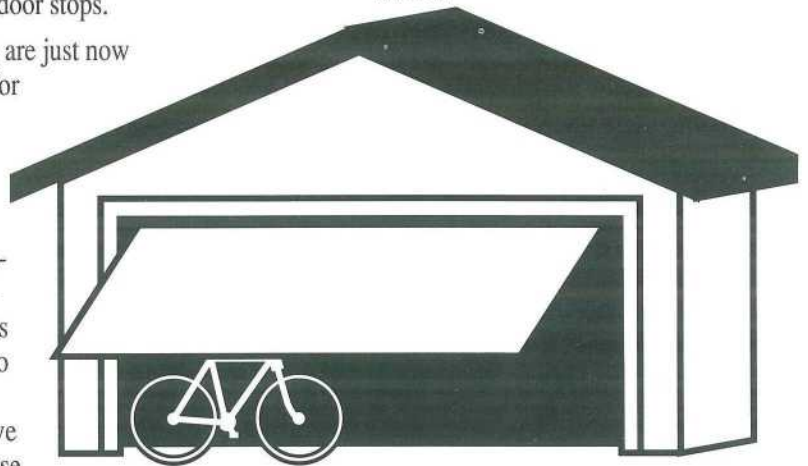
Only two states, California and Minnesota, have mandatory safety standards for openers. Federal legislation has been proposed which would apply to Texas as well as the rest of the nation.

Manufacturers of newer models have changed their design to automatically reverse when the door strikes an object. Many older models will not automatically reverse, particularly those made before 1982.

Because there are no mandatory federal or Texas standards, it is important that the homeowner be aware of the safety features of their unit, and if it poses a potential danger, replace it.

The Minnesota Safety Council makes these recommendations for automatic garage-door openers:

- Buy only door openers approved by Underwriters Laboratories;
- Make sure the door moves freely and is properly balanced;
- Be sure the wall-mounted button for the door opener is out of the reach of children and that they do not have access to portable transmitters;
- Test the door's automatic reverse safety mechanism at least once a month and disconnect the opener if the reverse does not work; and
- Never duck beneath a descending garage door and warn your children about this hazard.



Family Safety Update

Law Update

The Legislature has changed the workers' compensation laws for workers injured after 1990. Many injured workers will find their disability payments reduced under the new laws, while facing further restrictions on the right to a doctor of their choice and to trial by jury if their claim is disputed.

The new laws do not change a worker's right to sue a third-party who caused the injury for additional compensation, and they do not affect workers injured before 1991 if their claims are filed in a timely manner.

Step Up To Ladder Safety

A man places a ladder on a small table for a couple of feet of additional height, falls, and suffers a fractured skull and leg.

A 19-year-old man spray painting is electrocuted when the metal ladder he was moving hits a power line.

Two tales of people working with ladders, who, if they had used proper equipment and proper care, could have avoided serious injury.

Annually, more than 50,000 people are injured, some fatally, when they used either the wrong ladder or incorrectly used the right ladder.

The National Safety Council says some of the most frequent causes of accidents involving ladders are using a broken ladder, improper climbing procedures, improperly securing the ladder, contacting a power line, and selecting the wrong ladder for the job to be done.

Proper ladder selection is the first step in reducing such accidents. Most ladder manufacturers provide instructions as well as warnings for the consumer to follow in selecting the proper ladder. Ladders designed for household use should not be used in the workplace. Conductive metal ladders should not be used when electrical equipment is to be used.

O.S.H.A. is developing standard which could change the design of ladders provided in the workplace. It would require a stabilizing support for the ladder.

Safety tips for using a ladder:

- Make sure all employees are trained in the proper selection and use of all ladders.
- Inspect each ladder before use. Test all working parts.
- Always use the right ladder for the job. Contact the manufacturer if adequate instructions are not available.
- Never stand on the top three rungs of a straight ladder.
- Always place straight ladders at the manufacturer's recommended angle with the wall.
- Place the ladder so that it has a firm footing. Do not place ladders on boxes, barrels, or other unstable objects to obtain additional height.
- Carry small tools or other work materials in your clothing or attached to a belt. Do not carry large objects up or down a ladder—use a hand line.
- Never over-extend your body on a ladder. Move the ladder to where the work can be completed without reaching.
- Keep steps and rungs free from grease, oil, paint, snow, ice, mud, or other slippery substances.
- Be sure that a stepladder is fully opened and its spreaders are locked before you climb it. Never climb higher than the second step below the top of the stepladder.

Workplace Safety Update

ROBERTS & ROBERTS

Roberts & Roberts is an East Texas law firm with a history of helping people injured by unsafe practices and products. Randell C. Roberts and Bruce L. Roberts are each certified as specialists in Personal Injury Trial Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization and Civil Trial Advocacy by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. They are members of the National Safety Council and The Institute for Injury Reduction as well as associate members of the American Society of Safety Engineers.



Consumer Product Warnings & Recalls

Editor's Note: This section is to alert our friends to some products which may be unsafe. Should you see a product you own on this list, you can call toll free the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at 1-800-424-9393 for more information.

This is not a complete list of all product alerts by either the Consumer Product Safety Commission or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

• • •

The Consumer Product Safety Commission has taken the first step to ban infant "bean bag" cushions because of 30 reported cases of babies found dead on them.

The cushions are filled with plastic foam beads or other granular material that can conform to the body of an infant, especially to the face, when the infant is placed stomach-down.

Recall instructions can be obtained by calling toll-free: 1-800-638-2772. Most manufacturers have offered refunds.

• • •

The manufacturer of Evenflo child safety seats said it is recalling the buckle assembly on some models because it does not meet government safety standards. The recall involves more than 3 million child safety seats manufactured between April 15, 1985 and April 22, 1990. Each seat has a black buckle housing and a red push-button release. To obtain a repair kit, consumers should call them on their toll free line at 1-800-837-8926 or write to Evenflo at 1801 Commerce Drive, Piqua, Ohio, 45356.

• • •

The Allied Tube and Conduit Corporation imported 8,000 Charmglow electric bug killers in the U.S. in 1987. The units bear the following model numbers on labels affixed to their tops: 071512 (15 watt); 073425 (25 watt); 074001 (40 watt); 078012 (80 watt). Infrequent removal of dead insects from the units, along with high humidity, can cause the electric bug killers to catch fire.

• • •

The grommet guarding in the fuel system of 91,000 1986 Ford Aerostar trucks and vans may be inadequate in protecting against fuel leaks. Engine fires could result.

• • •

A potential defect in the cruise control systems of 120,000 1983-1984 Toyota Camrys and 1984 Toyota Corollas could cause unexpected high engine speeds.

