



County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Use of Personal Appliances

Page 1 of 8

Policy Type: Administrative

Category: Facilities

Policy Name: Use of Personal Appliances

Policy Owner: Facilities

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the County of Santa Clara's commitment to working toward net-zero energy consumption, fostering sustainable energy practices, and providing safe working conditions in County facilities. The use of personal appliances has the potential to cause numerous health and safety issues, including, but not limited to, overloading circuits; disrupting heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; posing fire hazards; causing mold; and damaging facilities and property. This policy is intended to reduce these and other risks, as well as ensure that departments consider potential problems prior to allowing employees to use personal appliance.

Policy Summary

Application

The policy only applies to personal and common workspaces. It does not apply to designated break areas. The department head, or designee, has the authority to determine which appliances are appropriate for a designated break area and which areas shall be designated as break areas.



Use of Personal Appliances

Personal Appliances, as defined below, may not be plugged into electrical outlets in County facilities or connected to any County equipment, including County computers. Examples of personal appliances include, but are not limited to:

- Space heaters
- Televisions
- Holiday or decorative lighting
- Refrigerators
- Water coolers
- Coffee makers
- Microwaves
- Toasters
- Hot plates, hot pots, and other appliances used to cook and/or heat food or drink

County department heads and facility managers, or their designee(s), are responsible for monitoring the use of Personal Appliances and addressing violations of the policy. **The department head or designee has the discretion to allow specific appliances in workspaces if those appliances are necessary for the conduct of County business or for the health of the employee.**

Employees requesting permission to use a personal appliance must submit a **Personal Appliance Request Form** to their department head or designee. The department head or designee must review and respond to an employee's Personal Appliance Request Form within five (5) days of receipt, and must indicate on the form the reason for the refusal or approval of a personal appliance request.



County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Use of Personal Appliances

Page 3 of 8

When considering a Personal Appliance request, the department head or designee must consider the risk that certain appliances may overload electrical circuits, create fire hazards, or destabilize the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system. Therefore, the department head or designee should seek the advice of the appropriate facilities maintenance staff when considering whether to allow appliances to be plugged into County outlets or County equipment.

Pre-Approved Appliances

The following appliances may be plugged into electrical outlets in County facilities or connected to County equipment without the approval of a **Personal Appliance Request Form**:

- Small fans
- Desk lamps
- Cell phones, including chargers and adapters
- Mobile devices, including chargers and adapters
- Music devices used with headphones
- Breast pumps

If a department head or designee determines that an appliance is necessary for a common area or break room, the department head may purchase the appliance pursuant to all relevant County procurement policies and procedures, including [Board Policy 7.13 – Procurement, Management and Disposal of Electronic Products](#), and [Board Policy 8.4 – Zero Waste Policy for County Facilities and Operations](#).

Restrictions for Certain Types of Personal Appliances

If a department head or designee allows decorative lighting in personal or common areas, extension cords, or use of space heaters, users must take



County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Use of Personal Appliances

Page 4 of 8

additional care when using these appliances. Use of the following appliances in County facilities is subject to the California Fire Code and the following restrictions:

- **Holiday Lighting:** Holiday lights and decorations used in personal or common office areas must use LED bulbs, and may only be left on only during regular working hours.
- **Extension Cords:** With the exception of 'power strips' or 'surge protector' strips that are equipped with internal circuit breakers, extension cords may only be used on a temporary basis for immediate use. Extension cords used for this purpose shall be a minimum of twelve gauge wire. Extension cords shall be plugged directly into an outlet and never into a power strip.
- **Space Heaters:** Personal space heaters are not allowed except at the discretion of the department head or designee for health reasons or in response to a reasonable accommodation request. If approved, the space heater shall be fully enclosed, be fire safety rated by a national independent testing laboratory such as UL or ETL, and come equipped with automatic shut off safety features. Models should consume 700 watts of electricity or less. When in use, space heaters must be plugged directly into an outlet (not an extension cord). Sufficient clearance must be kept in order to prevent combustibles from getting too close to the heater.

Procedures

Submitting a Personal Appliance Request Form

- 1) The **employee** completes the **Personal Appliance Request Form** and submits it to the department head or designee.



County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Use of Personal Appliances

Page 5 of 8

- 2) Within five (5) working days of receiving the Personal Appliance Request form, the **department head or designee** reviews the request and indicates the following:
 - 2a) Whether the request is approved or denied;
 - 2b) Whether the request is approved indefinitely or for a specified period of time;
 - 2c) The reason for the approval or denial, including whether the appliance is 1) necessary for the conduct of County business, or 2) necessary for the health of the employee;
 - 2d) Any additional restrictions on the use of the personal appliance, at the discretion of the department head or designee.
- 3) The **department head or designee** retains the Personal Appliance Request Form.
- 4) The **department head or designee** continuously ensures that department employees are in compliance with the policy, including any additional restrictions on the specific type of appliance listed in this policy or as indicated on the **Personal Appliance Request Form**. Additionally, the **department head or designee** ensures that all employees comply with the department head's or designee's decisions regarding specific appliances.



Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- 1) **"Personal Appliance"** means any appliance, device, or any other electronic equipment that is personally owned (not provided by the County) and that requires an electrical cord or power source to operate.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) **My department does not have a kitchen, so we use an empty cubicle as our kitchen/break area. Do we have to get rid of all of our appliances in this break area?**

No, so long as your department head has approved the empty cubicle as a designated break area. Department heads have the discretion to designate break areas, and these areas need not be actual kitchens, so long as the break area does not violate any health or safety laws, such as the Fire Code.

- 2) **My building is extremely cold and the heating system cannot be repaired. Do I have to give up my heater?**

Some buildings have outdated or otherwise insufficient heating systems. Employees in these buildings still must fill out a **Personal Appliance Request Form** in order to keep their personal heaters. The department head could approve such a request under either reason – for the health of the employee or to ensure that the employee can efficiently and comfortably conduct County business.

- 3) **Do I have to submit a Personal Appliance Request Form if my device was approved under a Reasonable Accommodation request?**



County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Use of Personal Appliances

Page 7 of 8

No. Employees who have been granted by the County the use of a device or appliance as a reasonable accommodation for a reason related to a disability or medical condition may use that device or appliance without submitting a Personal Appliance Request Form under this policy. See the Equal Opportunity Department's website at [url]/sites/resources/eod/Pages/reasonable-accommodation.pdf for more information on reasonable accommodations.

4) Do I have to bring in a doctor's note in order for my appliance to be approved as "necessary for the health of the employee"?

No. Although a doctor's note or other documented reason for the need of an appliance may aid a department head in deciding whether to approve a device, department heads need not require such documentation in order to approve an appliance as "necessary for the health of the employee."

Related Policies

- Procurement, Management and Disposal of Electronic Products - Board Policy 7.13 - <https://saecommon.sccgov.org/countypolicy/Board-Policy-7.13-Procurement,-Management,-and-Disposal-of-Electronic-Products.pdf>
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy - <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/eod/Documents/reasonable-acommodation-policy.pdf>
- Zero Waste Policy For County Facilities and Operations - Board Policy 8.4 - <https://saecommon.sccgov.org/countypolicy/Board-Policy-8.4-Zero-Waste-Policy-For-County-Facilitites-and-Operations.pdf>

Related Forms and Information



County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Use of Personal Appliances

Page 8 of 8

- 2013 California Fire Code –
http://www.ecodes.biz/ecodes_support/Free_Resources/2013California/13Fire/13Fire_main.html
- Information Technology User Responsibility Statement –
<https://iservices.sccgov.org/sccurds>
- Office of the Fire Marshal - Use of Decorative Materials for Offices -
[url]/sites/policies/FormsrelatedtoPolicies/Fire-Marshall-Office-Use-Of-Decorative-Materials-For-Offices.pdf
- Personal Appliance Request Form –
[url]/sites/policies/FormsrelatedtoPolicies/Personal-Appliance-Request-Form.pdf

History

Date	Changes Made
11/13/2015	Added Use of Decorative Materials For Offices to Related Forms and Information. (Kyle Larson)
1/22/2015	Policy amended to remove three-prong requirement for space heaters. (Kyle Larson)
12/26/2014	Effective date of Policy.
11/26/2014	Policy uploaded. (John Myers)
7/23/2014	Policy adopted.