

SAFETY FACTS ON BURNS

HOT LIQUIDS BURN LIKE FIRE!

Over 500,000 scald burns occur annually in the U.S., and the two highest risk population are residents under the age of 4 and adults over 65.

Hot Water Causes Third Degree Burns...

...in 1 second at 156°

...in 2 seconds at 149°

...in 5 seconds at 140°

...in 15 seconds at 133°

Scalds in the Dining Room

- Hot liquids can cause life-threatening burn injuries.
- Coffee, tea, soup and hot tap water can be hot enough to cause a serious burn injury.
- Scald and steam burns are often associated with microwave oven use.
When hot tap water reaches 147 F, it can cause a third degree burn in just 1 second.

Scalds and Microwave Ovens

- Scald and steam burns are often associated with microwave oven use.
- Many elderly adults, especially cognitively impaired residents are not familiar with microwave use and may not be familiar with basic safety concepts.

Hot Tap Water and Scald Burns

- When tap water reaches 140° F, it can cause a third degree (full thickness) burn in just five seconds.
- Use caution when bathing residents. Some showers have single lever faucets which are easy for confused residents to turn on, possibly to the hot water only setting.

If a Resident is Scalded

- Quickly remove hot wet clothing to eliminate the source of the burning.
- Place the burned area in cool water immediately to stop the burn process and reduce pain.
- Do NOT apply ice; that could damage tissues.
- Do NOT break blisters; that can lead to infection.
- Do NOT apply butter or ointments; these can encourage infection.
- DO cover the burn with gauze or a Band-Aid.

The resident's physician should be contacted about any burn. If the wound covers an area greater than the palm of a hand, or is on the face or genitals, or covers a joint, the resident should be taken to the Emergency Department.

Prevention Ideas For Safety Committee Consideration

- Keep residents out of the "traffic path" and check their location before moving any hot liquids through the halls or dining room.
- Remove tablecloths from dining room tables at mealtimes. They can catch on resident clothing or wheelchairs and pull everything down, including hot liquids from the table.
- Consider marking a "NO ZONE" in front of areas where hot liquids are held. Teach residents to remain out of this zone. This can be done with colored tape on the floor.
- Coffee can be served from carafes with screw on lids. These lids have to be unscrewed before any liquid can be poured.
- Hot beverage assessment results can guide staff in determining the resident's ability to safely handle hot liquids.
- Kitchens could make coffee at two temperatures: one urn at "regular" temperature and one at a reduced temperature of 120 degrees or less.
- All hot liquids can be in secured areas to prevent residents who are impaired from access.
- Coffee urns can be mounted and secured on serving carts to prevent tipping.
- Coffee cups should have handles large enough for resident's hands to grasp securely. Many residents have limited mobility and grasp and have decreased fine motor pincher ability.
- Cups are available with handles on both sides for those residents with tremors or strength issues.
- Microwave ovens can be in secured areas to prevent residents who are impaired from access.
- Secured areas for employee use could have door knobs equipped with sequence codes which would allow the employees easy access without a key but prevent residents from entering these areas.
- Be careful when removing coverings or lids from microwaved foods. Puncture plastic wrap before heating foods in the microwave.
- Stir foods to distribute the heat. Many microwaves have a tendency to heat from the inside out toward the edge.
- Extreme caution should be exercised when heating liquids and soft food. The amount of food/liquid to be heated, the starting temperature of the food/liquid (refrigerator or room temperature), and the specific microwave setting you select will influence the final temperature.
- Read and follow the directions for the operation of the microwave oven.
- Adjust the thermostat settings on your water heater to produce a temperature of 90 F to 110 F. (Follow your State's guidelines.)
- Before placing a resident into the bath, test the temperature of the water with a bathtub thermometer. An elderly resident's delicate skin will burn more quickly than a younger adult's skin.
- Water temperature logs and mixer valve checks can be done on a routine basis as part of your preventative maintenance program.
- All heating elements and radiators should be checked while running to assess the outside casing temperature. This includes baseboard heaters.