

State Fire Marshal Geraci Announces Burn Awareness Week February 2-8, 2020

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STATEWIDE - February 3, 2020 - In recognition of National Burn Awareness Week (Feb. 2-8, 2020), the Office of the State Fire Marshal is sharing basic burn prevention tips and reminding consumers that everyday items can be burn hazards if care is not properly taken. This year's theme focuses on contact burn prevention.

A contact burn is a type of burn most associated when skin touches something hot, such as pavement, a fireplace grate, or pans from the oven. These burns can happen at any age, but children under 5 years old face a higher risk.

While a majority of contact burns result from contact with heat, some burns, such as frostbite or hypothermia, result from exposure to extremely cold temperatures. Hypothermia can affect anyone but infants, the elderly, and people who suffer from diabetes or heart conditions are at greater risk.

According to the most recently available figures from the American Burn Association, an estimated 70,000 contact burn injuries were seen in U.S. emergency rooms in 2018. One-third of the patients seen in emergency rooms were children under the age of five.

"We want to remind Maryland parents, educators, and children that not all burns result from fires," said State Fire Marshal Brian S. Geraci. "While most who suffer burn injuries will survive, many of those survivors will sustain serious scarring, life-long physical disabilities, and adjustment difficulties. To avoid common household products creating a burn injury, we urge consumers to be aware of items that present a hazard and take measures to prevent burns."

Tips to Prevent Contact Burns

- Indoors, supervise children around space heaters, wood stoves, fireplaces, radiators, and stoves and ovens in use. Keep them three feet away from things that can get hot by using baby gates, high chairs and playpens.
- Outdoors, keep children three feet away from barbecue grills and campfires. Keep area clear of trip hazards so no one falls into the fire.
- Turn heating pads, electric blankets and space heaters off before sleeping. This is especially important for older adults who can suffer serious burns more quickly as their skin thins with age.
- Have hot pads available whenever cooking. Long oven mitts are best when needing to reach in or over hot surfaces, such as inside an oven or over a grill. Assume all pots and pans are hot before touching.
- Remember to treat items coming from the microwave as you would items from the oven. Make sure children are taller than the microwave and supervise them using it.
- Protect your feet by wearing shoes when walking on hot pavement or sand and keep pets off hot pavement too.

Hot Liquid Burns to Children Under 5

The leading burn problem in Maryland is hot liquid scalds to children under five, accounting for one in five of every burns reported. "Please remember that hot liquids burn like fire," said Geraci.

Hot Drink Safety

- Never hold or carry a child while you have a hot drink in your hand. A wiggling baby can cause a spill on themselves or on you.
- Consider using a "travel mug" with a tight-fitting lid to prevent or minimize spills.
- Keep hot drinks and soups away from the edge of tables and counters. Putting them in the center of the table keeps them away from curious fingers.
- Use place mats instead of tablecloths and turn pot handles inward to prevent children from pulling hot liquids onto themselves.

Tap Water Safety

- Set your hot water heater to 125°F or less. Massachusetts law requires a temperature between 110°F and 130°F.
- Supervise young children in the bath and face them away from faucets. Babies and toddlers can turn on hot water when you turn your back.
- Never leave a child in the tub alone for even an instant.
- Run your hand through bath water to test for hot spots.