

Occupational Health & Safety

Survey: U.S. Families Underestimate Hot Water Dangers at Home

January 8 2008

Hot tap water is not high on the list of worries for most Americans. In fact, according to a new survey by Kelton on behalf of anti-scalding device HotStop and the nonprofit Home Safety Council, more than 75 percent of U.S. adults say they have little or no concern about hot tap water as a home danger. Yet every year approximately 3,800 injuries and 34 deaths occur in the home due to scalding from excessively hot tap water, HSC says.

"Most hot tap water burns happen to children under five and older adults," said Jill Fuller, vice president of sales and marketing at American Valve, manufacturers of HotStop. "By making a commitment to use safe hot water products and practices, caregivers can drastically reduce the number of scald injuries that occur in homes across the nation every year."

According to HSC, the national survey clearly demonstrates the public's lack of knowledge about hot water dangers. "Many people don't know that hot water can burn like fire. It takes only one second for a child under the age of five to receive third-degree burns from water that's 140 degrees Fahrenheit or hotter," said Meri-K Appy, HSC president. "Whether cooking, handling hot drinks, or bathing, parents and caregivers must take action to protect their children and older loved ones from dangerously hot water."

HSC, together with HotStop, offer the following scald prevention tips:

- Set your water heater at 120 degrees Fahrenheit or lower (just below the medium setting).
- Consider using an anti-scald device, which can help prevent scald burns in the tub and shower.
- Test the water temperature before you or your children get in the tub.
- When children are in the tub, watch them closely.
- Use heavy pot holders when cooking.
- Keep children away from the range when you are cooking.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the range.
- Test micro-waved and heated food for heat before feeding young children.

- When drinking hot drinks, keep them out of the reach of children, away from the edge of counters and off low tables.
- Never carry a child with a hot drink in your hand. Using a "commuter mug" with a tight-fitting lid can help reduce a hot spill if the beverage tips over.
- Treat a minor burn injury immediately with cool running water for 3 to 5 minutes. Do not apply ice, which can harm the skin. Do not apply butter or lotions because this can keep the skin temperature hot, increasing the injury. Apply a sterile bandage.
- If the scald is serious, get medical treatment fast.

For more information, visit www.homesafetycouncil.org or www.h2otstop.com.

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