



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Scald Burns

In the United States, more than 112,000 people enter the emergency room at the hospital per year with scald burns. Of these, 6 percent or 6,700 have to be hospitalized. Almost 3,000 of these scald burns come from tap water in the home. The two high risk groups are children under the age of five and adults over the age of 65. It only takes one second to get a serious third degree burn from water that is 156 degrees Fahrenheit. If instant coffee granules melt in your tap water, it's set too hot and could cause serious burns to you or someone in your family.

Safe Water Temperatures

Water at temperatures between 124 and 130 degrees Fahrenheit is hot enough to do laundry, dishes and other household cleaning tasks without causing a major threat to you and your family. However, water heaters often are installed at somewhere between 140 and 150 degrees.

A word of caution - water heater thermostats are not very reliable. Many are marked "low-medium-high" and who knows what that is? Those that have numbers shouldn't be relied upon either.

Turn on just the hot water at your sink or bathtub. Let the water run for three to five minutes. Then check the water temperature with a meat or candy thermometer. If the water is 130 degrees or higher, the thermostat on the water heater should be turned down. Wait one day for the water to reach the new temperature and then check the temperature at the same faucet again. Repeat the process until your water temperature is between 124 and 130 degrees Fahrenheit.

Precautions When Bathing a Child

Another way to prevent scald injuries is to change behavior when it involves children. Run cold water into a bathtub first and then add hot water to adjust the temperature. Before placing a child into the tub, measure the temperature of the water. It should not exceed 102 degrees.

Take the phone off the hook while bathing the child. This will help maintain necessary continuous supervision of the child who is in the bathtub. Clearly mark the hot water setting on single valve units and turn the valve to the cold setting after filling the tub. This will reduce the risk of unintentionally introducing hot water into the tub.

Keep toys out of the bathtub. Placing toys in the tub while bathing the child establishes the bathtub/bathroom as a "play area." Give the child a washcloth to hold and face the child away from the faucet handles. This will take their attention away from the faucets and reduce the risk of them turning on the hot water during the bathing activity. As the child matures, teach them that the bathroom is a place for specific activities and not a play area. Establish designated "play areas" in the home and teach the child that these are the places to play rather than the bathroom or other areas of risk.

Regulate the Water Temperature

Install a tempering valve (pressure/temperature regulating) in the water line, which leads to the bathroom from the water heater. Set the temperature at 120 degrees. This valve has the potential of totally eliminating the risk of tap water scald burn injuries.

If you live in an apartment, ask the building's maintenance department to lower the hot water temperature. Explain why if they don't seem to understand.

"Child-Proof" Faucet Valves

If you are building a home or remodeling a bathroom, position the faucet valves at a distance of 36-40 inches above the bathtub. This will prevent young children from gaining access to the valve handles. Where practical, install the "push and turn" type valve handles. These handles are somewhat like the "child-proof" caps on medicine bottles.

Treatment for Scalding

If anyone is burned by scalding, run cool water over the burn. Cover the burn with a clean cloth and seek medical attention. Never put ointments, butter or anything greasy on a burn.