



## Over 90% of Hot Water Heaters Pose Hazards to Young Children and the Elderly

Every day, over 300 young children are taken to emergency rooms with burn injuries due to hot water scalds. Scald burns are the most common burn injury for children 4 years and under. Hot water can burn just like a fire. Over 90% of homes with young or elderly people have the water temperature set too high. It should be no higher than 120° F. At this temperature, it will take 5 minutes to get a 3rd degree burn for a young child. But at 145° F, this time drops dramatically to less than 2 seconds.

Unfortunately, most parents are not aware of this significant hazard in their home. These same temperatures can also scald elderly people as well.

It is recommended that parents or elderly people do the following:

- ◆ **Measure The Hot Water Temperature** – The best time to do this is in the morning 1 hour after people have showered. Use a digital meat thermometer to measure the maximum temperature. If the temperature is above 120°, you will need to lower the setting.
- ◆ **Bathtub Temperature** – Never allow the temperature of the water in a bathtub to exceed 100° F. Use a thermometer in the water or better yet on a spout cover to ensure that the water is safe.
- ◆ **Changing Temperature On Gas Water Heaters** – Because thermostats differ, either refer to the manufacturer's instructions, or call your local gas company or a plumber to do this. Typically, this is done by rotating a big knob on the side of the furnace. Most are marked warm, hot or very hot, or A, B, C and the like.
- ◆ **Changing Temperature On Electrical Hot Water Heaters** – Call your local electric company to adjust the thermostat. Some companies offer this service at no-charge. Otherwise, if you are not comfortable doing this, you can call in a plumber. Hot water should not be used for at least two hours prior to setting. To make the adjustment yourself, start by shutting off water to the water heater, then turn off the circuit breaker to the heater or remove the fuse that serves the heater. Most electric water heaters have two thermostats, both of which must be set to a common temperature for proper operation. To reach these thermostats you must remove the upper and lower access panels. Adjust the thermostat following the instructions provided with the appliance.
- ◆ **Changing Boiler-Based Water Heaters** - If you have a boiler that is used to heat your home and your hot water, you may want to contact a heating specialist as you don't want to adversely affect your home's heating system.
- ◆ **Retest** - You will need to re-test the water temperature at least 1 day later to ensure it is properly set.
- ◆ **Running Out Of Hot Water** – If after you lower the hot water temperature and you find that you are frequently running out of hot water, don't be tempted to set the temperature higher. Instead, you can install a larger capacity hot water heater, a second hot water heater working in tandem with the original heater, or install an on-demand tankless hot water heater.

The unfortunate thing of this is that people just don't think a scald could happen to their children, and/or they are just not aware of the possibility, often with very tragic consequences. A little bit of proactive work can go a long way to keeping your family safe.

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