

National Burn Awareness Week, February 5 – 11, Draws Attention to Young Children Being at High Risk for Burn Injuries

Burns and scalds can be deadly, especially to children under the age of five. **In South Carolina during 2003, over 1,400 children fourteen years old and under were treated in hospitals for fire and burn related injuries. More than half of these injuries occurred in children under the age of 5.** Nationally, 600 children die and another 100,000 children are treated for burn-related injuries annually.

“Young children have thinner skin and burns more deeply and quickly. In a matter of seconds, children can sustain devastating physical and emotional injury”, **says John Reich, Deputy Director of the SC Division of Fire and Life Safety.** “Kitchens and bathrooms can be the most deadly area of your home, especially for children and close supervision is the key”, **adds Reich.** **The South Carolina Division of Fire and Life Safety joins with National Association of State Fire Marshals, the Shriners International,** and other related organizations to recognize National Burn Awareness Week as an opportunity to offer these burn prevention tips:

- When cooking, use back burners when possible and keep pot handles turned to the inside so they don't stick out over the front of the stove. If left within reach, a curious child might grab or tip the pot over onto them.
- Electrical cords for cooking appliances should be kept away from counter edges. This will prevent a child from pulling appliances off counter-tops and onto them.
- Test bath water before putting your child into the bathtub. Children can be scalded by bath water in only a few seconds. Set your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or below and always provide supervision.
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level and in every sleeping area of your home. Test them once a month and replace batteries when necessary. Working smoke alarms provide early warning detection allowing more time to escape a fire.

“Fires don't always happen to the people next door. In less than three minutes, your home could be totally involved in fire and it's important that everyone reacts quickly and calmly to escape,” **says Reich.** A home escape plan should be developed identifying two ways out of each room, a meeting place outside, and a way to contact the fire department once you are outside. Practice the plan regularly, at least annually, to make sure that everyone knows what to do when the smoke alarm sounds.