Burns & Mass Casualties

Mass *trauma* (damage caused by an accident) and disasters such as explosions and fires can cause a variety of serious injuries, including burns. These can include:

- Thermal burns, which are caused by contact with flames, hot liquids, hot surfaces, and other sources of high heat.
- Chemical burns.
- Electrical burns.

FOR BURNS, IMMEDIATE CARE CAN BE LIFESAVING.

SAFEGUARD YOUR HOME

- Install smoke detectors on each floor of your home with one outside the bedroom.
- Change batteries in smoke detectors at least once a year. (Never borrow smoke alarm batteries for other purposes).
- Keep emergency phone numbers and other important contact information posted close to your telephone.
- Draw a floor plan and find two exits from each room. Windows can serve as emergency exits.
- Practice getting out of the house through the various exits.
- Designate a family meeting place at a safe distance outside the home.
- Respond to every alarm as if it were a real fire.
- Call the fire department after escaping. Tell them your address and do not hang up until you're told to do so. Let them know if anyone is trapped inside.
- **Never** go back into a burning building to look for missing people, pets, property, etc. Wait for firefighters.

HOTEL AND WORKPLACE FIRE SAFETY

- Become familiar with exits and posted evacuation plans each time you enter a building.
- Learn the location of all building exits. You may have to find your way out in the dark.
- Ensure that fire exits are unlocked and clear of debris.
- All buildings, whether homes, workplaces or hotels, should have working smoke alarm systems. Make sure you know what the alarm sounds like.
- Respond to every alarm as if it were a real fire. If you hear an alarm, leave immediately and close doors behind you as you go.
- Establish an outside meeting place where everyone can meet after they have escaped.
- Call the fire department after escaping. Tell them your address and do not hang up until you're told to do so. Let them know if anyone is trapped inside.
- **Never** go back into a burning building to look for missing people, pets, property, etc. Wait for firefighters.

IF YOU ARE TRAPPED IN A BURNING BUILDING

- Smoke rises, so crawl low to the ground where the air will be cleanest and coolest.
- Get out quickly if it is safe to leave. Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth (moist if possible).
- Test doorknobs and spaces around doors with the back of your hand. If the door is warm, try another escape route. If it's cool, open it slowly.
- Slam it shut if smoke pours through.
- Use the stairs - **never** use an elevator during a fire.
- Call the fire department for assistance if you are trapped. If you cannot get to a phone, yell for help out the window. Wave or hang a sheet or other large object to attract attention.
- Close as many doors as possible between yourself and the fire. Seal your door with rags. Open windows slightly at the top and bottom, but close them if smoke comes in.

FIRST AID

- What you do to treat a burn in the first few minutes after it occurs can make a huge difference in the severity

of the injury.

IMMEDIATE TREATMENT FOR BURN VICTIMS:

- "Stop, Drop, and Roll" to smother flames.
- Remove all burned clothing. If clothing adheres to the skin, cut or tear around burned area.
- Remove all jewelry, belts, tight clothing, etc., from over the burned areas and from around the victim's neck. This is very important; burned areas swell immediately.

TYPES OF BURNS: FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD DEGREE

FIRST DEGREE BURNS:

First-degree burns involve the top layer of skin. Sunburn is a first-degree burn.

Signs:

- Redness
- Painful to touch
- Skin will show mild swelling

Treatment:

- Apply cool, wet compresses, or immerse in cool, fresh water. Continue until pain subsides.
- Cover the burn with a sterile, non-adhesive bandage or clean cloth.
- Do not apply ointments or butter to burn; these may cause infection.
- Over-the-counter pain medications may be used to help relieve pain and reduce *inflammation* (soreness).
- First degree burns usually heal without further treatment. However, if a first-degree burn covers a large area of the body or the victim is an infant or elderly, seek emergency medical attention.

SECOND DEGREE BURNS:

Second-degree burns involve the first two layers of skin.

Signs:

- Deep reddening of the skin
- Pain
- Blisters
- Glossy appearance from leaking fluid
- Possible loss of some skin

Treatment:

- Immerse in fresh, cool water, or apply cool compresses. Continue for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Dry with clean cloth and cover with sterile gauze.
- Do not break blisters.
- Do not apply ointments or butter to burns; these may cause infection.
- *Elevate* (raise) burned arms or legs.
- Take steps to prevent shock:
  - Lay the victim flat,
  - Elevate the feet about 12 inches,
  - Cover the victim with a coat or blanket.
  - Do not place the victim in the shock position if a head, neck, back, or leg injury is suspected, or if it makes the victim uncomfortable.
- Further medical treatment is required. Do not attempt to treat serious burns unless you are a trained health professional.

THIRD-DEGREE BURNS:

A third-degree burn penetrates the entire thickness of the skin and permanently destroys

.

Signs:

- Loss of skin layers
- Often painless (Pain may be caused by patches of first and second-degree burns which often surround third-degree burns.)
- Skin is dry and leathery.
- Skin may appear charred or have patches which appear white, brown or black.

Treatment:

- Cover burn lightly with sterile gauze or clean cloth. (Do not use material that can leave lint on the burn.)
- Do not apply ointments or butter to burns; these may cause infection.
- Take steps to prevent shock:
  - Lay the victim flat.
  - Elevate the feet about 12 inches.
- Have person sit up if face is burned. Watch closely for possible breathing problems.
- Elevate burned area higher than the victim's head when possible. Keep person warm and comfortable, and watch for signs of shock.
- Do not place a pillow under the victim's head if the person is lying down and there is an airway burn. This can close the airway.

IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IS REQUIRED. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TREAT SERIOUS BURNS UNLESS YOU ARE A TRAINED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL**.**

Information courtesy of the CDC.

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