

# People Newspapers

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## Beating the Water Heat

New faucet line protects against hot water burns

By Gina Harkins

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Special Contributor

There are as many as 3,800 injuries and 34 deaths every year from accidents involving excessively hot tap water, according to the Home Safety Council. Despite the risk, many people do not think about this danger affecting their homes, but the makers of a new anti-scalding faucet hope they can prevent this unnecessary problem.

The HotStop anti-scalding faucet is engineered to stop water from reaching unsafe temperatures, and the company works with the Home Safety Council to spread awareness on hot tap water scalds.

Dr. Angela Mickalide works as director of education and outreach for the Home Safety Council, an organization focused on educating the public about the risks involved with hot tap water.

“We talk about hot tap water being like liquid fire, and we think people simply aren’t aware of the risk, which is why we developed partnerships with people like the American Burn Association and HotStop,” Mickalide said. “We are trying to raise awareness among people so they take proper precautionary steps.”

Mickalide said the Home Safety Council conducted a survey of 1,000 adults last year, and found a large knowledge gap on the dangers of hot tap water. According to the survey’s results, three out of four adults had no concern over their home’s tap water temperature and only 38 percent knew the correct safe water temperature, 120 degrees. The Home Safety Council hopes to spread the understanding that hot tap water can and does severely injure and kill people.

It was the story of a young girl who tragically passed away days before her first birthday that initially inspired HotStop’s manufacturer, American Valve, to create the product.

Leah McCammon died a few days after sustaining third degree burns over most of her body caused by 140-degree water spewing out of a faucet she broke trying to pull herself up by its handle.



Courtesy photos

The HotStop anti-scalding faucet product line ranges from \$24 to \$39.



Officials from American Valve became aware of McCammon's story at a charity event where he grandfather spoke, and it encouraged the company to explore options to reduce the risk of hot water burns.

The HotStop products can be placed on tub spouts, shower heads, and hand-held showers to stop water from flowing when it reaches an unsafe temperature.

"Each HotStop product contains a temperature actuated flow reduction device, which is a thermostat designed to trigger at a predetermined temperature," said Marcy Gutterman, marketing director for American Valve. "When the thermostat triggers at 117 degrees, it engages a valve inside the device which reduces the water flow down to a trickle."

The HotStop products specifically aim to protect those most at risk for hot tap water burns — children under the age of five and older adults. The products are also ideal for people with disabilities, slower reaction times, thinner and more sensitive skin, and duller senses, making their likelihood for severe scald injuries much greater.

"The suggested temperature of a bath for a young child is 100 degrees, and it only takes one minute for a young child to get a third-degree burn in 125 degree water," Gutterman said. "It take one second for a child under the age of five to receive third-degree burns from water that is 140 degrees or hotter."

length of time for hot water to cause 3rd degree burns		
temperature (°F)	time (adult)	time (child under 5)
100° F	cool bath	average bath
102° F	average bath	warm bath
105° F	average hot tub/whirlpool	not recommended
120° F	9.5 minutes	4.5 minutes
125° F	2 minutes	1 minute
130° F	30 seconds	10 seconds
135° F	15 seconds	4 seconds
140° F	5 seconds	1 second
150° F	1.8 seconds	.5 second

Source: Shriners Burn Institute

To further safeguard hot water temperatures, the Home Safety Council advises filling a bath tub with cold water, then hot water, and again with cold, and running a palm throughout the entire tub to check for hot spots. Mickalide also stressed the importance of turning hot water thermostats to 120 degrees, and never leaving children unattended in the tub.

HotStop Anti-Scald products run from \$24 to \$39, and American Valve has plans to expand the line with a wider range of styles, shower functions, and finishes.

Though survey results have not been conducted yet to determine how successful the HotStop products have been in preventing injury, Mickalide said a meeting this month will determine the Home Safety Council's next step.

"It is nearly impossible to measure scald prevention," Gutterman said. "But we are confident that our products can reduce the risk of injury in households where it is installed."

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