

Facts About Burns

Each year, more than two million people are victims of burn injuries, half are hospitalized and thousands die as a result of fire and burns. Death from burns occur at a rate of four per 100,000 population.

- More than one-third of those injured and killed are children. Burns are a leading cause of accidental death among children under age 14, with the highest risk group being under two years old.
- Three-fourths of all burns result from the victim's own actions. In the "over 70" age group, 75 percent of burns involve cooking, smoking and matches.
- Between 75 and 80 percent of burn injuries occur at home.
- In 1978-79, statistics indicated that one out of forty children started a fire with a cigarette lighter; by 1986, that number was one in nine.
- Hot water and scalding liquids are an ever-increasing cause of burn injuries in the United States. Tap water heated to above 130 degrees Fahrenheit can produce burns in seconds.
- According to the National Fire Protection Association, 85 percent of American homes have smoke detectors, but only half of them are operational because of missing or dead batteries.
- A recent study revealed that more than 90 percent of microwave oven owners have been burned to varying degrees, but many of the burns were never reported. More than 75 percent of homes have a microwave oven.
- Alternative heating devices, such as wood and coal-burning stoves and kerosene heaters, have increased the number of contact burns dramatically, with more than one-third of the victims children.

From the National Burn Awareness Week Task Force.

More On Tobacco Funding

In the last issue, readers of *Public Fire Education Digest* may have read a commentary on the use of funding from tobacco interests in support of fire prevention and protection programs. The commentary piece questioned whether accepting such funding might reduce the credibility of fire protection professionals in promoting production of a more fire-safe cigarette, among other fire-related issues.

Also included in the commentary were references to professionals in other fields who are struggling with similar dilemmas: the health community wondering whether tobacco investments, while lucrative, are appropriate; and sports organizations being challenged for accepting sponsorship of sporting events by tobacco (and alcohol) companies. Now we have discovered information that suggests that the professional credibility of others is, in fact, being questioned because of their associations with the tobacco industry.

In the July 1991 issue of *American Journal of Public Health* is a report titled "What Scientists Funded By The Tobacco Industry Believe About Cigarette Smoking". The report says that more than 90 percent of scientists receiving research funds from cigarette manufacturers agree that smoking is an addiction that causes a wide range of serious, often fatal, diseases, based on a survey of researchers at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute. In addition, nearly 95 percent of those surveyed said they believe that smoke from someone else's cigarette is harmful to a nonsmoker.

These findings conflict with the tobacco industry's description of

the scientific community as divided on the question, the authors say, and indicate the industry does not accept the opinions even of the scientists it funds.

Meanwhile, in another article from the same journal, a University of Michigan researcher cites a tobacco industry document stating that the industry has executed a brilliantly conceived strategy to create doubt that cigarette smoking is a serious cause of disease. In "Tobacco Industry Scientific Advisors: Serving Society Or Selling Cigarettes?" the author says the tobacco industry has used funding of scientific research to lend credibility to its position that questions about smoking and health remain inconclusive.

The author asked the 13 members of the scientific advisory board that approves industry-supported scientific research, "Do you believe cigarette smoking causes lung cancer?" Four members said "yes"; a literature search showed that two members who declined to answer had published their own scientific judgment that smoking causes lung cancer, and the remainder of the group refused to answer the question. One member who responded said he believes that members of the group fear involvement in tobacco product liability lawsuits.

The author of the study called for the scientific advisory board to "publicly dissociate itself from the industry's campaign to minimize the public's understanding of the dangers of smoking."

For more information on these reports, contact the American Public Health Association, 1015 15th Street NW, Washington DC 20005; 202/789-5600.