

Preventing Gasoline Burn Injuries

A Campaign Kit for Burn Awareness Week 2001

MEDIA GUIDE

The media is one of your most powerful links to the community. One media story can reach more people than the hardest working volunteers could ever reach in person or at local health fairs. By gaining the interest and respect of the media, you can build awareness among parents and others and gain support for your gasoline burn injury prevention campaign.

You may find that reporters react as positively to your Preventing Gasoline Burn Injuries campaign as they do to such programs as bicycle safety. The issue of gasoline-related burn injuries has received very little media attention primarily because the problem has not been effectively brought to their attention. A key factor determining the success or failure of your burn prevention campaign is your ability to generate media interest and news coverage.

The media will be more interested in your campaign activities if you augment national statistics with local data on gasoline burn injuries. Gasoline burn data, however, does not have to be statistics alone. Information about the experiences of being burned, the pain of treatment and rehabilitation, and the long-term emotional effects of burns are also compelling and meaningful. Your first step should be to gather this and other data. This will enable you to create your own local gasoline burn injury fact sheet.

Publicizing the Gasoline Prevention Campaign

There are many ways to publicize your gasoline prevention campaign. The ABA Burn Prevention Committee recommends the following:

- Hold press conferences and provide written supplemental information
- Sponsor an event (e.g., a safety fair at a local shopping mall)
- Suggest story ideas to your newspaper's health beat reporters
- Send timely news releases to reporters and media contacts
- Use media support materials included in this packet
- Offer to do guest appearances on local radio or TV talk shows
- Maintain a list of burn survivors who are willing to share their experiences and who have the attributes necessary to make good spokespersons

The ABA Burn Prevention Committee strongly encourages you to plan a local event and to hold a press conference at the beginning of your campaign. You may want to hold your press conference to kick off National Burn Awareness Week (the second full week

in February each year). It must be emphasized, however, that this “week” is only a kick off—burn awareness must continue to be promoted **all year long**. Don’t stop at doing just one event. Perhaps you can plan a quarterly event and thereby reach the public four times a year.

Tips on Working with the Media

In working with the media, keep the following tips in mind:

1. It is very important to establish a close relationship with all varieties of news media in your region—newspapers, magazines, radio and television (especially cable). If you do not already have a media list, develop a complete list including the names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, and email addresses of all media contacts. Be sure to get the name of the media representative at that publication or station that handles health and medical issues. These people change positions and/or responsibilities quite often, especially in the larger cities, so try to update the list at least twice a year. (Note: Your organization’s public relations department may already have this information, which could be made available for you to use).
2. Establish deadlines with each contact. Know how much lead-time they need to receive articles for publication, for calendar listings, and for news conferences.
3. Be concise but informative when using press releases. Make it of interest. Use local statistics when possible. Use quotes of key people involved. Be certain to include the date, contact names, and telephone numbers for further information.
4. Allow sufficient time for a news release to be received and then follow up by telephone. Also, offer additional information if needed. Supplemental written information or press packets make it easier for the interviewer (fewer notes) and makes it less likely you will be misquoted.
5. Sample public service announcements (PSAs) have been included in this packet. Issue these and/or build your own (using local and/or regional data or incidents when possible). A quote from the head of your local Burn Center, Chief of Staff, or Fire Chief will definitely add credibility and interest to the PSA.

Press Conferences

In scheduling a press conference, be sure to plan ahead, and try to ensure that your press conference does not conflict with any other event, if possible. Plan your conference at a convenient time, so that reporters, photographers and camera crews will be able to meet publication deadlines and scheduled news programs (e.g, the noon news and the nightly news).

Issue a “media alert” notifying the media of the conference; the reason for it; the names and organizational affiliations of those who will be attending; as well as the date, time, location, and other details surrounding the conference. If possible, combine forces with other concerned groups; for example, a burn center, a fire department, a police department, or a school district. Because they are able to draw from personal experience, burn survivors can speak effectively about the pain and suffering associated with burns, and are able to capture and hold the media’s interest. Although both burn survivors and their families are newsworthy, it is important to make certain they are willing to be interviewed and are prepared for the questions they may be asked. Do not add to their trauma by placing them in a situation for which they are not emotionally prepared.

Other tips to keep in mind for press conferences include the following:

- Prior to the press conference, try to determine who is planning to attend and which media they represent. Make sure you have a sufficient number of informational packets on hand to distribute.
- If circumstances call for it, have your own photographer on hand, who can quickly develop photos for distribution to press members who were not accompanied by a photographer. If advance photographs can be made available, this will add to the speed with which the news can be printed.
- Keep the press under control. Set an agenda, distribute it, and follow it. Allow for questions and answers at the end of the conference—not during it. If necessary, limit the number of questions from a reporter and/or the amount of time it takes to answer.
- Be sure to follow up with each person who attended the news conference. This will give you an opportunity to provide them with additional information they may need and also to determine when their story will run. Also, once their story has run—and especially if it was a favorable item—be sure to thank the reporter, either by telephone or with a brief note.

Sample Public Service Announcement (PSA)

Subject

**GASOLINE BURN
INJURY PREVENTION**

Contact

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Start use: Immediately

Stop use: February 11, 2001

READING TIME: 10 SECONDS:

Gasoline and other flammable products can injure the people you love. Call the (insert local identification) for free gasoline burn injury prevention tips at (phone number).

READING TIME: 20 SECONDS:

Burns caused by gasoline and other flammable products occur at an alarmingly high rate here in the U.S. The (insert local identification) reminds you to store gasoline properly and only in approved containers. For free gasoline injury prevention safety tips, call (insert local identification) at (phone number).

READING TIME: 30 SECONDS:

This is Burn Awareness Week and the (local organization) wants you to know that gasoline and other flammable products can injure the people you love. Burns caused by gasoline and other flammable products occur at an alarmingly high rate here in the U.S. Remember to store gasoline properly and only in approved containers.

The (insert local identification) has free burn safety tips that will help keep your family safe from burns. For more information, call (local phone number).

Sample Press Release 1

For Immediate Release

Contact: Local person and title
Local phone number
Or American Burn Association 1-800-548-2876

Burn Awareness Week

February 4-10, 2001

“Preventing Gasoline Burn Injuries”

Gasoline, when ignited in a controlled manner to power engines, serves a very useful purpose. Because it is so commonplace, however, we sometimes take its presence for granted. But the same quality of explosive ignition that makes gasoline so valuable as a fuel can cause terrible injuries when it is handled carelessly or used in a manner for which it is not intended. Gasoline and flammable liquid-related burns, however, are a preventable problem.

Deaths and injuries resulting from gasoline ignition or exposure occur in a variety of ways. Many of the deaths and injuries associated with gasoline occur at home. Gasoline causes a significant number of burn injuries each year. This is why the American Burn Association and its Burn Prevention Committee is involved in providing information on preventing gasoline burn injuries.

It is estimated that each year in the United States there are over 140,000 gasoline-related fires. Thousands of people visit hospital emergency rooms or are hospitalized for gasoline-related injuries each year, and approximately 500 people die from such injuries.^{1,2,3} (Insert local statistics here). Most of these injuries and deaths occur in and around the home, or result from improper transportation of gasoline in portable containers.

Gasoline-related burn injuries can be prevented through increased education and by changing the behavior of those who store and transport gasoline other than in their highway vehicle fuel tank. In order to promote the prevention of such incidents, an understanding of the flammability of gasoline and other petroleum products is needed.

For more information about preventing gasoline burn injuries, contact the (local organization) at (phone number) or the American Burn Association at 1-800-548-2876.

Source: *The U.S. Home Product Report, 1993-1997, Flammable or Combustible Liquids*, National Fire Protection Association, Fire Analysis and Research Division, Quincy, MA, August 2000.

Sample Press Release 2

For Immediate Release

Contact: Local person and title
Local phone number
Or American Burn Association 1-800-548-2876

Burn Awareness Week February 4-10, 2001 “Preventing Gasoline Burn Injuries”

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Uses and Misuses of Gasoline

- **Use gasoline only for its intended purpose—to fuel an engine.**
- Only use these products outdoors, in well-ventilated areas.
- Start charcoal grills with fuels labeled as charcoal starters—never use gasoline!
- Never siphon gasoline by mouth! Even a few drops inhaled into the lungs may cause death.
- **Never prime a carburetor with gasoline.**

Portable Gasoline Containers

Did you know . . .

that there have been reports of fires resulting from filling metal portable gasoline containers (gas cans) in the back of pick-up trucks while the containers were resting on plastic bed liners or in vehicles with carpeted or rubber matted surfaces? These fires resulted from the build up of static electricity. The insulating effect of bed liners, carpeting or rubber mats prevents the static charge generated by gasoline flowing into containers from grounding. The discharge of the buildup of gasoline to the grounded gasoline dispenser nozzle may cause a spark and ignite the gasoline. Both ungrounded metal (most hazardous) and plastic gas containers have been involved in these incidents.

Tips Regarding Use of Portable Gas Containers

- Use only containers that have been listed, labeled or approved for gasoline.
- Do not dispense gasoline into a portable gasoline container while it is located inside a vehicle, trunk or pick-up truck bed. Make sure that the container is stable and positioned on the concrete, asphalt or ground prior to dispensing gasoline.
- When placing the gasoline container on the ground surface, make sure it is positioned away from other vehicles, people and moving traffic.
- Use caution when dispensing gasoline from the nozzle. Make sure the nozzle remains in the gasoline container until the dispensing is complete.
- Avoid using nozzle latch, or hold-open devices when filling a gasoline container.
- Do not smoke when dispensing gasoline into containers.
- Avoid use of cell phones when dispensing gasoline.

Transporting Gasoline

Before, during and after the transport...

- Gasoline should be transported only a short distance. Do not include transporting gasoline along with a list of other errands you need to accomplish.
- When transporting gasoline, make sure it is stored in an approved container, with the lid tightly closed.
- If you are transporting gasoline in a car, keep the container in the trunk and keep the trunk lid ajar for ventilation.
- Secure the gasoline container with rope or cord to prevent sliding.
- Remove the container and store it properly—never store a gasoline container in a stationary vehicle.
- After filling, transporting or using gasoline, wipe the outside of the portable gasoline container to remove any liquid or residue.
- Do not leave a container of gasoline in the direct sunlight, or in the trunk of a car that is in the sun. As the temperature of gasoline rises, it results in a build up of pressure in the container, which could lead to an explosion.
- Never smoke around gasoline, either while filling or transporting the container.

Gasoline Storage

The following points should be kept in mind when storing gasoline:

- **First, never store gasoline in the house!** Always store the container away from a house and from any other habitable structure.
- Always store the container in a cool, well-ventilated area. Keep it away from any source of heat or sparks, such as a water heater, electric motor, or car engine.
- Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids around a flame source.
- When not in use, keep gasoline containers locked up at all times.
- Store gasoline in approved, properly labeled safety containers.
- Store only the minimum amount of gasoline needed (usually no more than one gallon).
- Have a Class B type fire extinguisher located near gasoline storage areas. (Type B fire extinguishers, which are specially designed to extinguish gasoline fires, may be purchased at local hardware stores. Be sure to read and follow the manufacturers instructions.)
- Always keep gasoline out of the reach of children.
- Use gasoline and flammable liquids outdoors, in well ventilated area, for their intended purpose only.
- Never use glass or plastic bottles for gasoline storage. These can be easily mistaken for other less harmful liquids, which could result in them being ingested (swallowed) accidentally.

Source: *The U.S. Home Product Report, 1993-1997, Flammable or Combustible Liquids*, National Fire Protection Association, Fire Analysis and Research Division, Quincy, MA, August 2000.