

***FIRE* Information**

Office of the State Fire Marshal • Department of Fire Services

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Summer Auto Safety

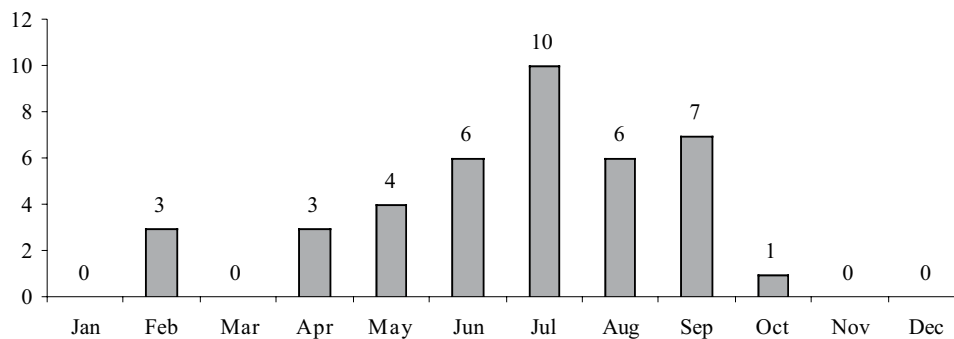
Automobiles are supposed to get us where we want to go. Usually, they do, but sometimes there are problems. When people don't know how to respond to these problems, they can get hurt.

- Sometimes, the car overheats. Trying to open a hot car radiator can cause serious burns. Every driver should learn how to handle this situation safely.
- If your car overheats, the best advice is to "chill out" for a while. The contents of the radiator are under tremendous pressure. If you open the radiator cap, the boiling liquid and steam can erupt causing severe burns to your hands, arms and face. Wait at least a half an hour for the car to cool down. Then, use a rag to open the cap slowly, releasing the pressure as slowly as possible.
- Adults and teenagers are most likely to suffer burns from car radiators, according to the Massachusetts Burn Injury Reporting System (M-BIRS). Nearly 70% of the people scalded by hot car radiators in the past five years were between 15 and 44 years old.



- As the weather gets warmer, car radiator scalds become more common.
- If you are driving and think your car is on fire, the best advice is to pull over, get out of the car and wait for help. Lifting the hood will only give you a face full of flames and feed the fire more air.
- Take care of mechanical problems promptly. A well-maintained car is a safer car.
- Gasoline is so much a part of our lives that we don't think about it. However, it is a very dangerous substance. Over the past five years, Massachusetts hospitals treated 85 people for gasoline-related burns.

**Car Radiator Scalds by Month
1999 - 2003**

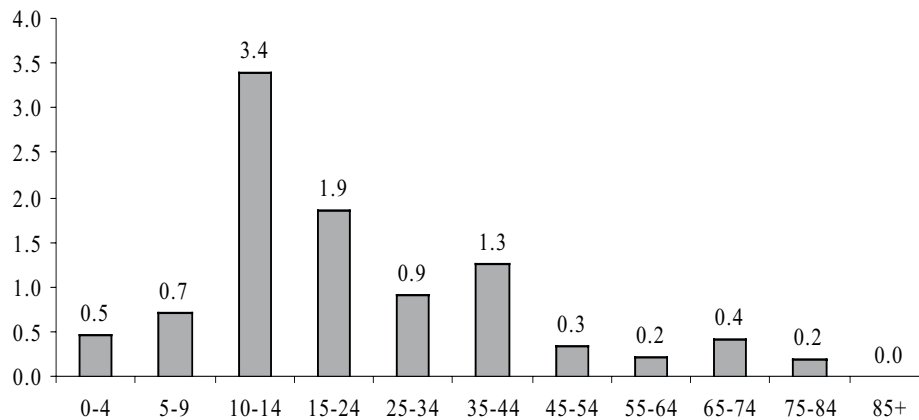


- Gasoline vapors ignite at a very low temperature. These fumes are heavier than air, and can travel a distance to find a spark. Keep anything that could provide heat to start a fire away from gasoline. A spark or a lit cigarette is enough to light the invisible fumes that may linger on clothing. Gasoline is a tool, but a dangerous one and it demands respect.
- Turn off your car when you get gas. At self-service stations, remember to put the nozzle back and your gas cap on before driving off.
- When you work on your car, you can get gasoline on your hands and clothes. Smoking and gasoline can be a deadly combination.
- Keep gasoline away from children. Children between ten and fourteen were almost three and a half times as likely to get in trouble with gasoline. The graph below illustrates the risk of gasoline-related burns by age group.



- If you need to carry or store gasoline, use an approved container. Make sure it is in a secured, upright position away from passenger areas, and that the fill and vent openings are tightly closed. At home, always store these containers in safe secure areas – outside of living areas – away from ignition sources such as pilot lights.
- When refilling an approved gas container, place it on the ground, insert the pump nozzle and bring it into contact with inside of the container. This will reduce the risk of static electricity igniting the vapors.

**Risk of Gasoline Burns by Age Group
1999 - 2003**



(Data obtained from the Massachusetts Burn Injury Reporting System. When the risk equals one, the percentage of burns in the age group matched the percentage of the population in the age group.)