

# Media Release

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## Bathrooms biggest risk for hot water scalds, burns

The bathroom is one of the most hazardous rooms in the house for babies, young children and the elderly. This is where scalds and hot water burns can occur, as well as falls and drowning.

Victoria's plumbing regulations, which are overseen and enforced by the Victorian Building Authority (VBA), limit heated water temperatures in bathrooms to not more than 50 degrees at the basin, bath and shower in new houses and where appropriate, in renovations.

The VBA reminds householders the only exceptions to this are in premises intended for children and the elderly, such as early childhood centres, schools and nursing homes, where the heated water temperature limit is 45 degrees.

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) said in a 2016 policy statement that over 90 per cent of hot tap water scalds in the home occur in the bathroom, largely due to immersion in water that is too hot. Each year in Australia, on average, around 800 people are hospitalised due to scalding from hot tap water.

Several options are available to reduce the temperature of bathroom hot water, and they must be fitted by a registered or licensed plumbing practitioner. They include:

- **Tempering valves** – fitted to heated water pipelines to mix hot and cold water to a specific temperature, adjustable between 35 degrees and 50 degrees; and
- **Hot water shutdown devices** – fitted to taps and outlets that can automatically cut off water flow once the water reaches the pre-set temperature.

It is important the temperature of household hot water limits the risk of burn injuries, however, there are other risks associated with stored hot water not being hot enough.

In 1998, Victoria passed legislation aimed at eliminating the risk of the legionella bacteria forming in storage hot water services, while still preventing scalding at hot water outlets used for bathing.

As a result, hot water must be stored at a minimum of 60 degrees to kill legionella bacteria. To prevent scalding, this must then be reduced to no more than 50 degrees at the hot water outlets in bathrooms.

The VBA and home safety bodies advise there are many ways to protect children and the elderly from serious injury in the bathroom, including:

- Using a bath thermometer to ensure the water is a safe and comfortable temperature. The recommended maximum water temperature for bathing young children is 37 - 38 degrees
- Using non-slip mini bath mats to help prevent falls in the bath
- Always remaining within arm's reach of children in the bath.

For more information on hot water safety in the home and to check that your plumbing practitioner is registered or licensed to do heated water work, visit the [VBA website](http://www.vba.vic.gov.au) (www.vba.vic.gov.au)

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