

Burning issues

“Drama and tragedy on ocean rally.

.... a crew member on a Volvo 60 was severely burned in a galley accident as the yacht broached, throwing a saucepan of boiling water over their legs. The victim was transferred to a cargo ship and rushed to hospital for skin grafts to 50% of their body”

Extract from Yachting Monthly, February 2008

Burns and scalds are fairly common on cruising boats but, thankfully, are generally minor. Accidents happen – the oven door swings open, the oven shelf slips, boiling water splashes or steam catches a hand. Cooks are often advised to wear waterproof trousers and boots at sea and to place mugs in the sink for filling. Locking the cooker in port is as important as letting it gimble at sea, keeping the dinner off the floor and your feet. A pressure cooker is a useful piece of galley

equipment, safe in the hands of those who understand how they work. If you don't, use it without the weight – it makes an excellent saucepan and the food is sealed safely inside.

Treatment for burns or scalds:

COOL IT immediately, preferably with running water for a minimum of ten minutes.

Also...

- Remove any constricting items such as rings, watches or belts and undo cuffs etc before the tissues begin to swell. Use gloves, if possible, and avoid touching the burn.
- DO NOT remove any clothing stuck to the burn, burst any blisters or apply lotion or cream. This includes aftersun cream for sun burn. It should not be applied until the area has cooled and no longer hurts.

While the cooling is in progress, assess the seriousness.



Consider:

- The circumstances of the injury. Could the airway have been affected or could the casualty have inhaled smoke or gas?
- The extent of the burn. The larger the surface area of the burn, the greater the chance of shock developing from the loss of body fluids.
- The depth of the burn. The deeper the burn, the greater the risk of infection and damage to nerves and underlying structures.
- Is the burn one of the special

cases mentioned in the First Aid Manual when immediate medical care is required? Check the manual and radio for medical advice via the Coastguard if required.

When cooled, the burn should be covered to minimise the risk of infection. Do not use anything too tight or that could stick to the skin. Use a sterile dressing, triangular bandage, piece of kitchen film or burn bag from the Category C first aid kit. Treat the casualty for shock.