



# Safe and Warm

## Frequently Asked Questions

Burn Centers and fire departments throughout California are seeing an increased number of patients from the unhoused communities this winter. The Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation, along with The Midnight Mission in Los Angeles, have partnered together to launch the Safe and Warm campaign, to reduce the number of burn injuries and fires among homeless communities.

### 1. What is the Safe and Warm campaign?

The goal of Safe and Warm is to prevent fires and burns among homeless communities through education and outreach

### 2. What does Safe and Warm provide?

- A double-sided Safe and Warm educational flyer in both English and Spanish
  - Dressing warm
  - Sleeping warm
  - Fire and cooking safety
  - What to do if you are burned
  - Stop, Drop and Roll
  - Cool a Burn with cool water
  - Call 9-1-1
- Mylar (reflective space) blankets for warmth

### 3. Why is this campaign needed?

Burn Centers and fire departments throughout California are seeing an increased number of patients from the unhoused communities.

- LA is a part of this trend.
  - Since 2014, the LA County+USC Medical Center Burn Center has seen steady year over year increases in the percent of homeless patients
    - 2014 - 2.43%
    - 2015 - 5.27%
    - 2016 - 6.13%
    - 2017 - 6.68%
    - 2018 - 11.5%
    - 2019 - 14.57%
  - For 2020, LAC+USC Burn Center numbers are significantly higher

- In May, nearly **one-third** (31.4%) of burn unit admissions were homeless
- In November, **17.6%** of admissions were homeless
- Other cities throughout California are seeing a similar rise in the number of fires among unhoused communities:
  - In San Diego in 2018, the fire department dispatch responded to **739** calls involving homeless or transient communities.
  - Through October of 2020, **1,018** callouts had been recorded (*NBC7 San Diego 10/13/20*)
  - San Jose Fire Captain Brad Cloutier reports his department responds on average to **three fires a day** among homeless residents of his city (*KPIX5 9/30/20*)
  - Fresno Fire PIO Steve Brown says his department has seen a **76% year over year increase** in fires caused by homeless activities (*ABC30 Fresno 8/12/20*)

#### 4. What's driving this increase in burn injuries amongst the homeless?

- It's cold out there. The average low temperature in LA for January is **47.8 degrees F**
- Most burn patients admitted to LAC+USC have injuries caused by **candles** in tents or flame by butane or propane from **cooking**
- Sadly, Los Angeles has also seen **an increase of incendiary attacks** against and within the homeless community (3% of admissions)
- COVID-19 has **closed or limited access to shelters** that might otherwise provide a warm meal and a place to stay

#### 5. Once burned, how do homeless individuals fare?

- A retrospective study of homeless admitted to regional burn centers between 1994-2006 concludes that:
  - Homeless patients have **more extensive** burn injuries than people with a stable home
  - Hospital stays are **longer**
  - Within a year, nearly a quarter (23.1%) of patients were readmitted to hospital; of those, **more than half** (53.3%) were readmitted for their burn injury
  - Source: *"The Homelessness Crisis and Burn Injuries: A Cohort Study,"* Sebastian Q Vrouwe, MD et alia, *Journal of Burn Care & Research*, Vol.41, Issue 4, July/August 2020

#### Contact:

Jennifer Radics-Johnson, MBA, CFRE, CVA  
 Executive Director  
 50 N. Hill Avenue, Suite 305  
 Pasadena, CA 91106  
 Phone: (818) 848-0223 ext. 12  
 Fax: (818) 848-0296