

**Serious Burns From Car Seat Heaters**

**NEWS & INFORMATION**

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**SERIOUS BURNS FROM CAR SEAT HEATERS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

(Eugene, Oregon) - Electric car seat heaters are now commonplace. But while they may provide some comfort, they pose grave risks of causing severe burns to paraplegics, quadriplegics, or others who have sensory deficits of the lower body and legs. In representing individuals who have suffered such burns, we have identified no less than 63 serious burn injuries suffered by individuals with such sensory deficits.

We have found that a surprising percentage of seat heaters are defective. Designed to provide heat at safe levels, no more than 105 degrees, many heated seats will produce temperatures as high as 120 degrees F to 160 degrees F. Exposure to 120 degrees F can cause a third degree burn in 10 minutes.

This grave risk of harm has remained largely unknown, because most individuals, when they feel an uncomfortable temperature, simply turn the heater off. But people with sensory deficits in the lower body and legs do not feel that heat. They may not even know that the heater is on. Tragically they usually learn of their burns only when they arrive home and remove their clothing in preparation for bed.

It is critically important that paraplegics, quadriplegics and others with sensory deficits be warned that many seat heaters are defective and can produce a burn through all three layers of skin. Such burns often require hospitalization for months and the resulting scar tissue will lack the strength and resilience of the original skin. Damaged skin limits the time the victim can sit and also increase the risk of additional injury including decubitus ulcers. These burns further limit the victim's opportunity to engage fully in life.

One of the early reported seat heater burns was suffered by a young veteran that we represented. When he returned home from the Marine Corps, he bought a four wheel drive vehicle recommended for paraplegics. He did not choose a seat heater, but the vehicle came with heaters in both front seats. After returning home after one of his first trips, he discovered that the skin on his buttocks came off with his jeans as he prepared for bed. He had not known that the heater had somehow accidentally been turned on and had not felt the heat. Engineers who tested the vehicle found that the driver's seat could generate temperature as high as 150 degrees F.

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While the manufacturer recalled two model years of that vehicle, we have found that many models of other years as well as vehicles of other manufacturers with dangerous seat heaters remain on the road. Every paraplegic or other person with sensory deficits should be made fully aware of the risk and those electric heaters should be disconnected.

We have prosecuted and are currently prosecuting cases against DaimlerChrysler and General Motors for compensation for individuals who have suffered such burns. The goal is not only to obtain fair compensation for the victims, but to cause the manufacturers to permanently remedy those defects and provide clear warnings of the danger to those who use their vehicles.