

Hot Water Safety Policy and Procedure

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all participants are supported in environments where hot water is used safely. It aims to prevent injuries such as scalds or burns and promote awareness of associated risks among staff and carers. The policy highlights the importance of proper temperature control, participant consent, and individualised planning in maintaining safety and dignity during personal care routines that involve hot water.

Participants may be at higher risk of burns due to reduced sensation, mobility limitations, or the need for assistance during bathing. This policy helps staff understand these risks and take practical steps to prevent avoidable harm while respecting each participant's autonomy and preferences.

2.0 Scope

The policy applies to all staff involved in the delivery of personal care services where hot water is used.

3.0 Policy

SilaCa Tasmania Pty Ltd is committed to maintaining safe environments by managing hot water risks in accordance with the NDIS Practice Standards, NDIS Code of Conduct, and Incident Management and Reportable Incidents Rules 2018.

All support staff must be trained in identifying hot water hazards and in applying safe practices when assisting participants with bathing, hygiene, and related activities. This includes understanding the risks associated with varying water temperatures and the health impacts of scalds or burns.

Key procedures include:

- Reviewing hot water systems as part of the initial Safe Environment Checklist and during regular service reviews.
- Ensuring water temperatures in bathrooms used for personal hygiene do not exceed 45°C, as recommended by [Australian Standards](#).
- Conducting risk assessments specific to the participant's environment, needs, and mobility.
- Using safe water handling techniques and temperature control devices where applicable.
- Recording and reporting all hot water-related incidents as per the Incident Management Policy.
- Engaging participants, families, and advocates in discussions about hot water safety, including the use of assistive technologies or supervision where required.

Staff must understand and be alert to the severity of burns:

Version: 1 **Date approved:** 31/07/2025

Approved by: J Croft - Director **Next review date:** 31/07/2026

- **First-degree burns:** Affect the outer skin and can cause pain and redness.
- **Second-degree burns:** Often blister, swell, and are painful. They carry a risk of infection.
- **Third-degree burns:** Can damage tissue beneath the skin and may require surgery or result in long-term health consequences.

In every service setting, the environment must be checked for risks to both participants and workers. Equipment failure or unsafe water temperatures must be reported immediately to the Manager.

Hot water safety must also be considered in emergency planning and during any transition of care. Participants' rights to safe support, dignity of risk, and informed decision-making are always to be respected, and practices should reflect a balance between safety and autonomy.

4.0 Procedures

All staff working with participants must know the risks surrounding burns and scalds and respond if the situation arises. We aim to protect the safety of participants, and all participants will be assessed against our Safe Environments Checklist – Home, Individual Risk Assessment and Safe Environment Risk Assessment, as relevant.

4.1 Safety Procedures

- A review of the environment is undertaken and recorded in the Support Plan.
- Risks are identified, and strategies are put in place to reduce risk or harm to a participant or staff member.
- Activities required/ requested are placed in the participant support plan, and the participant/advocate will sign off to ensure they approve.
- SilaCa Tasmania Pty Ltd will ensure that hot water is handled safely through training and review of the participant's environment.
- Staff are also responsible for ensuring that the water temperature will not injure the participant and checking the temperature before bathing or showering.
- Staff must check the environment for the risk of hot water spills and steam.

Hot water safety risk assessments must be completed on entry to service and reviewed at least annually or when circumstances change. These assessments will be documented in the Support Plan and signed by the participant and/or their advocate to ensure informed consent and understanding. Participants must be given the choice to determine their preferred way of managing hot water risks. Staff must always verify the water temperature before supporting participants with hygiene tasks and document any concerns about temperature regulation or faulty equipment immediately for escalation.

4.2 Prevention Strategies

Participants will be supported to understand hot water risks and, where appropriate, will be engaged in

checking water temperatures as part of promoting choice and autonomy. Staff must never expose participants to water without first checking the temperature using a thermometer or wrist/skin test and documenting this step as part of the support process.

Our organisation will train staff to reduce the risk of scalds in the bathroom by:

- Always run the cold water in the bath or shower first before the hot water
- Always run the cold water through the tap before the participant enters the bath
- Always check the temperature of the bath, shower or other hot water before a participant enters the water
- Do not leave the plugin while a participant showers if the shower is a combined bath and shower

4.3 First Aid

All scald and burn incidents must be documented and escalated under the Incident Management and Reportable Incidents Policy, including notification to the NDIS Commission if a reportable threshold is met.

- Apply cool running water to the site of the scald for 20 minutes
- Do not touch the burn
- Do not apply any lotions or ice to the area
- Remove any clothing or jewellery near the scald

4.4 Call an Ambulance

Staff are required to call an ambulance if:

- the burn/scald is larger than a 20-cent piece
- the burn is deep
- the burn has blisters, pus or discharge
- the skin appears leathery
- the burn is to the face, airways, hands or genitals
- there are patches of brown, black or white
- the person also has a fever
- the person is having trouble breathing

4.5 Supported Disability Accommodation (SDA) and Supported Independent Living (SIL) housing

All new hot water installations must comply with Australian Standards AS3500.4 1.11 and relevant state regulations (e.g., in NSW, a maximum of 45°C in care environments). For existing systems, regular testing and maintenance must be completed at least annually by a licensed plumber, and temperature control devices adjusted to meet state and NDIS safety requirements. Audit outcomes must be recorded and any non-compliance addressed immediately.

Our organisation will:

- Ensure that all new heated water installations use a thermostatic mixing valve or thermostatically controlled tap to deliver hot water not exceeding 45°C at fixtures used primarily for personal hygiene purposes (Australian Standards 2018, AS3500.4 1.11)
- For older heated water installations, consider installing a temperature control device such as a thermostatic mixing valve set to a maximum of 45°C (as per state requirements)
- Engage a licenced plumber to test and maintain any temperature control devices at least yearly (ABCB 2015)
- Ensure bathroom fixtures such as showerheads limit maximum water flow

4.6 Documentation and Reporting

- Any hot water safety incident must be recorded and actioned as per our Reportable Incident, Accident and Emergency Policy and Procedure
- Staff must inform their supervisor and complete relevant documents
- Management must use each incident as part of our Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure

All hot water safety incidents must be reported within 24 hours via the Incident Management system. Where a participant is harmed or placed at significant risk, a Reportable Incident must be lodged with the NDIS Commission as per NDIS (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018. All incidents and near misses will be analysed through the Continuous Improvement system, and trends monitored to identify systemic risks

5.0 Related Documents

- Support Plan
- Easy Read - Planning With You
- Individual Risk Assessment Profile
- Safe Environment Checklist – Home
- Safe Environment Risk Assessment
- Support Planning Policy and Procedure
- Work Health Safety and Environmental Management Policy and Procedure
- Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- Reportable Incident, Accident and Emergency Policy and Procedure
- Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure
- Emergency and Disaster Management Policy and Procedure
- Participant Safeguarding Policy
- Person-Centred Supports Policy and Participant Service Charter of Rights
- Advocacy Support Policy and Procedure (state-specific)
- Violence, Harm, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination Policy and Procedure

6.0 References

- Practice Alert – Hot water safety
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021
- NDIS Code of Conduct Rules 2018
- NDIS (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018
- NDIS (Practice Standards — Worker Screening) Rules 2018
- Australian Standards AS3500.4 1.11 (2021 update)
- Relevant State Guidelines for Maximum Hot Water Temperatures (e.g., NSW Health Guidelines)
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021