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Maine EMS – Heat Packs Memo

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Maine EMS is aware of two instances in which patients suffered full thickness burns from commercially available heat packs. In an effort to limit similar injuries in the future, the Medical Direction and Practice Board recommends the following:

- 1) When using heat packs in the treatment of cold injuries, remove all wet clothing and dry the patient's skin prior to utilizing the heat pack.
- 2) Never place the heat pack directly on the skin. Please wrap in an appropriate barrier prior to use.
- 3) Please choose heat packs with a maximum temperature of less than 113° F. Available evidence suggests that heat packs with peak temperatures above 113° F are most likely to cause burns.
- 4) Finally, in patients who are unresponsive, or unable to recognize a developing injury, please check the area in which the heating pad is placed regularly to ensure no tissue damage occurs.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. These reminders will be added to the Maine EMS Approved Equipment List, which may be found at <http://www.maine.gov/ems/documents/EquipmentList.pdf>.

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