

March 20, 1981

News

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas
5323 Harry Hines Boulevard Dallas, Texas 75235 (214)688-3404

CONTACT: Ann Harrell
Office: 214/688-3404
Home: 214/369-2695

*****Baxter and Big Bird fight fire deaths in children.

DALLAS--What do Big Bird and a burn surgeon have in common?

They both hate to see children burned, that's what!

And that's why Dr. Charles R. Baxter is backing Big Bird, Bert and Ernie and their friends from Sesame Street in an effort to teach pre-schoolers about fire, burns and fire prevention. Baxter is professor of surgery at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas and director of the Parkland Hospital Burn Center.

"Last year we had 154 children admitted to the pediatric burn unit here at Parkland Hospital, and we didn't want a single one of them!" says Baxter. "In order to realize the magnitude of this problem, you should know that while children under five years of age comprise seven percent of the population of this country, they account for 17 percent of the deaths from fire."

Baxter and his staff are supporting a pilot program aimed at teaching "caregivers" how to help small children learn about fires. Kindergarten and pre-school teachers, day-care operators and nursery attendants will attend free workshops this spring.

"You see, small children do not have concepts like older children or adults," says Rene Peña, regional administrator for Children's Television Workshop, sponsor of the program. "They may not understand that fire burns--or even that a burn hurts. That's why we must be careful not to give them any dangerous ideas or show them any harmful activities they might imitate, such as a child pulling a pan of scalding soup off the stove."

That's why childhood development consultants were careful to plan the teaching activities. The lessons, which use hand puppets, songs and skits, as well as incorporating other play activities, include teaching the following lessons:

- * That hot things can hurt or burn.
- * Fire can be used to cook food, heat homes and provide light.
- * Fire can also burn people and things.
- * Smoke detectors are devices that warn people about fires.
- * Smoke detectors are good things to have.
- * Firefighters are important people: they fight fires and rescue people.
- * Firefighters wear special protective clothing and use special tools and equipment to put out fires.

Other lessons which the workshops will teach include how to teach children to give matches to grown-ups, practice fire drills with the family, put a burn in cool water and how to stop, drop and roll if their clothes catch on fire.

Three-hour workshops for teachers and day-care workers will be held in Dallas on March 26, 28, April 13 and May 1. Other May workshops will be scheduled at a later date. For further information call Rene Peña at 214/826-5850.

##

DISTRIBUTION: AA,AB,AC,SC,AF,AG,AH,AI,AK,SL

PICTURES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST