

BURN CATEGORIES

1811

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Burns are classified as either MINOR or SERIOUS as outlined below. The *American Burn Association (ABA)* burn center referral standard is the baseline for establishing the categorization and treatment of burn injuries. The ABA standard is based on recommendations from the *Committee on Trauma, American College of Surgeons*. Additional recommendations are incorporated to create a clearly understandable burn management protocol for injured personnel. These classifications are intended to facilitate simple decisions under field conditions and ensure that proper procedures are followed from the onset of injury.

It is frequently difficult to categorize the exact extent of a burn and related injuries while in the field. It may take several days to establish the depth of a burn. When making triage decisions in the field, CAL FIRE staff will err on the side of overestimating the seriousness of an injury rather than underestimating it. See [Burn Flow Chart](#).

Minor Burns

Superficial (first degree) burns involving less than 10% of body surface area with none of the following factors:

1. Burns that involve the face, hands, feet, genitalia, perineum or joint areas; or
2. Burns resulting from chemical exposure; or
3. Burns with the potential of respiratory complications

Serious Burns

1. Partial thickness burns to greater than 10% of total body surface area in patients of all ages; or
2. Burns that involve the face, hands, feet, genitalia, perineum, or joint areas; or
3. All third degree burns; or
4. Electrical injuries (including those caused by lightning); or
5. Chemical burns; or

6. Confirmed or potential inhalation injuries^{**}; or
7. Circumferential limb or chest burns

(** - For the purposes of this policy, all burns resulting from fire entrapments, direct flame contact or superheated gases will be treated as having the potential for inhalation injuries.)

Every burn patient must be continuously evaluated to ensure that his/her condition does not worsen and, therefore, place the individual in a more serious category.

[\(see next section\)](#)

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[\(see Forms or Forms Samples\)](#)