

Paraffin safety campaign pays off

Three years after its inception, Engen's KlevaKidz Paraffin Safety Campaign is reaching more learners than ever and its message is hitting home, according to external research.



Khanyisa Balfour, Engen CSI manager, says the campaign has reached more than 78 000 learners (190 schools) in seven provinces across the country and neighbouring Lesotho.

The company commissioned pre- and post-run testing of the campaign to test the efficacy of its safety messaging. Conducted by Freshly Ground Insights (FGI) from July 2010 to January 2011, the poll queried children, aged nine to 12 from homes using paraffin, about their behaviour around paraffin.

Balfour says the study found that the biggest use for paraffin in their homes is for cooking. "Fortunately, they know that stoves should not be left unattended and that besides ingestion, most paraffin accidents occur around the stove."

The study also found that a large percentage of children use paraffin without adult supervision (97%). On the bright side, 15% more children said they have in their homes clearly marked containers with caps after the campaign (they reported using ordinary plastic containers before the campaign).

"In addition, children are storing paraffin containers in higher places and not on the floor as they did before the campaign. Significantly more children are using funnels when pouring paraffin, as opposed to doing it directly from the container. This illustrates that the message was received.

The research further indicates that children continue to realise the danger of paraffin, and understand that its deceptive similarity to water is the cause of ingestion by younger children.

"However, post the campaign they are more aware that it is a qualified danger. They know that the manner its use is the deciding factor."

A key question in determining the efficacy of the campaign is how many children report having been taught about the dangers as well as the safe uses and storage of the substance. "The test reveals an increase. Whereas 21% felt unschooled in the issues before the campaign, only 6% report being untouched by it after the campaign. We'll take that as an affirmation of the validity of what we're doing."

The company feels it can take lessons from the research for future campaigns. "Storage, for example, is still an issue. The knowledge is there but the prevention is not at the desired levels, although some change was witnessed after the campaign. On the whole, we feel there is a significant change in children's uses and knowledge, illustrating the effectiveness of the campaign," she concludes.

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