

Ouch! Ice bucket fails leave some bruised and battered — or worse



Joy Jernigan TODAY contributor

Everyone's doing it. It's the Ice Bucket Challenge, of course, which in just a few weeks [has raised \\$31.5 million in donations](#) for the [ALS Association](#).

But some participants, in a bid to get in on the action or outdo each other with crazy stunts while raising awareness for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, are ending up with bumps or bruises — or even a trip to the emergency room.

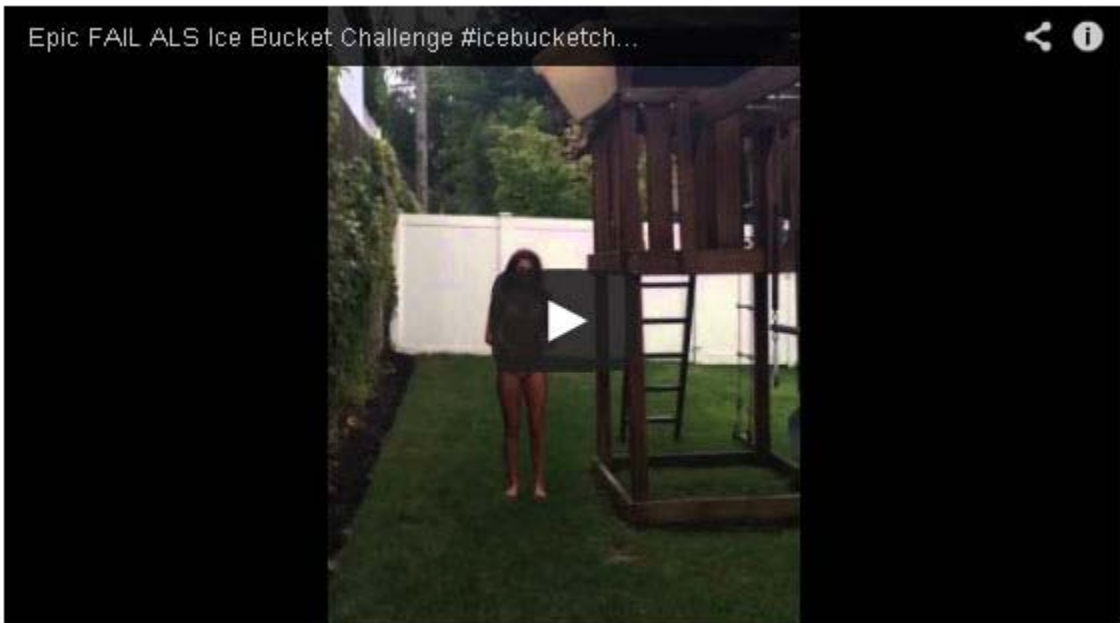


Video: TODAY rounds up some of most memorable Ice Bucket Challenge mishaps, including one of a man who got a bucket thrown at his face by an over-exuberant friend.

Martha Cook of New Bern, North Carolina, was bonked on the head by a metal bucket after her 8-year-old nephew, standing a few feet above her, was unable to hold on. The impact brought Cook, 50, to her knees and left a dent in the bucket. "It was forceful. It knocked me down," she said.



Then there's Skylar Cassenti, 15, of Farmingville, New York, who accidentally dropped a full bucket of water onto the head her friend, Fallon Schmidt, from the top of a swing set — all captured on video.



"It was actually surprisingly really heavy," said Cassenti, who said it took three people to lift the bucket to the top of the swingset. Schmidt, also 15, received a large goose egg but was otherwise fine.

Others have not been quite so lucky.

Four Kentucky firefighters were injured — two seriously — when a fire truck's ladder got too close to a power line after they helped Campbellsville University's marching band take part in an Ice Bucket Challenge, police said Thursday.

And Therese Todd, a 19-year-old college student from Silver Spring, Maryland, ended up in the ER after being hit with a bucket, which also floored the 5-year-old girl standing next to her. "It really knocked the wind out of me," said Todd.

Fortunately the little girl was OK, but Todd received a CT scan and a chest X-ray. While serious injuries were ruled out, she ended up taking ibuprofen for back and chest pain and was still sore a few days later. Four firefighters were injured — two seriously — when a fire truck's ladder got too close to a power line after they helped college students take part in an ice bucket challenge, police said Thursday.

"I still think it's important for people to do something for a good cause, but just be careful," she said.



Courtesy of Larry Cassenti

Skylar Cassenti, left, accidentally dropped a bucket full on water on her friend, Fallon Schmidt, during an Ice Bucket Challenge. Schmidt suffered a large bump and a headache but was otherwise OK.

Social media sites are full of videos of Ice Bucket Challenge fails — mainly trips, bonks or spills. Health experts say the fundraising stunt is fairly harmless, but risks increase when the ante is upped.

"People think they are doing this for a good cause, which is admirable, but it has its risks," said Dr. Elaine D. Josephson, spokesperson for the American College of Emergency Physicians and an emergency room doctor in New York. "Certainly dropping things from heights are definitely dangerous."

A heavy weight that falls onto someone's head from above can cause an axial-loading injury, a compression of the spine, she said.

Also, the shock of cold water from an ambush could potentially cause problems for someone with underlying health issues, such as a heart condition, she added.

Anyone who shows signs of a concussion — such as loss of consciousness, confusion or vomiting — should see a doctor, said Dr. Sudip Bose, an emergency room physician at Medical Center Hospital in Odessa, Texas.

“With this, it’s mainly a head injury. Usually it’s not severe enough to cause loss of consciousness,” he said. “It’s fairly harmless, to be honest.

“If you’re on top of the roof or of a house with a big garbage can, that’s a different thing.”

Take Matt Bieler of Bowie, Maryland, who was challenged to outdo a friend. So Bieler, 19, and his 17-year-old brother hoisted a large garbage can to the roof of their shed and filled it to the brim with a garden hose.

Two friends had already done something similar, he said, and were fine. So Bieler stripped to his swimsuit as his brother attempted to tip the can over his head, all the while being recorded.

"I guess it just slipped out of his hands onto the back of my head," Bieler said.



The weight of the full trash can tore the gutter from the roof and landed squarely on Bieler. Afterwards, he went to see a doctor, who tested him for a concussion. Fortunately, he escaped serious injury, but he did have "some bumps and cuts."

"They just told me to take it easy for a couple of days," he said.

A week later, he's still sore and describes the pain as "kinda like whiplash." He estimates that the trash can held about 30 gallons of water, possibly more. "That's at least 200 pounds right there."

If he had to do it all over again, he says he would probably use a much smaller bucket.

"I'm a teenager, and what teenagers don't do stupid things?"

Joy Jernigan is a TODAY contributor. Follow her on [Twitter](#) or [Google+](#).

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