

Holidays and Beyond: Cooking Safety

Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department and the National Fire Protection Association

We are most likely to experience a fire in our own home. Cooking is the leading cause of fire in the U. S. and locally. Because of this, habits in the kitchen should not be taken lightly.

In 2005, fire departments in the U.S. responded to 146,400 home structure fires that involved cooking equipment. These fires caused 480 civilian fire deaths, 4,690 civilian fire injuries and \$876 million in direct property damage.

- Cooking fires are the leading cause of home structure fires and associated civilian injuries.
- Ranges accounted for the largest share (67%) of home cooking fire incidents in 2005. Ovens accounted for 19%.
- Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires.
- In 2002–2005, unattended cooking equipment was the leading factor contributing to home cooking fires (38%), deaths (45%), injuries (46%) and direct property damage (37%).
- 12% of the fires occurred when something that could catch fire was too close to the equipment.
- Three-fifths (59%) of reported home cooking fire injuries occurred when victims tried to fight the fire themselves.

What can you do to prevent becoming a statistic?

- **Stay in the kitchen** when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove!
- **If you are simmering**, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- **Keep things that can catch fire** — potholders, oven mitts, paper or plastic bags, curtains — away from your stovetop.
- **Wear short, close-fitting** or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and can catch fire if it comes in contact with a gas flame or electric burner.
- **Have a “kid-free zone”** of at least 3 feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.
- **If you have a stove fire**, when in doubt, just get out and call the fire department.
- **Keep an oven mitt** and lid nearby when you're cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan.
- **To keep the fire from restarting**, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.
- **In case of an oven fire**, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you or your clothing. After a fire, the oven should be checked and/or serviced before being used again.
- **Open microwaved food slowly**, away from the face. Hot steam from a container of microwaved food or the food itself can cause burns.
- **Never heat a baby bottle** in a microwave oven because it heats liquids unevenly. Heat baby bottles in warm water.
- **Treat a burn right away**, putting it in cool water. Cool the burn for three to five minutes.
- **Cover with a clean, dry cloth.** If the burn is bigger than your fist, or if you have any questions, get medical help right away.
- **Think Green!** Unplug small appliances when not in use.