

Holiday Cooking Safety

The holiday season is fast approaching, and with it comes an increased risk of home cooking fires.

US fire departments responded to an average of 172,100 home structure fires started by cooking from 2012-2016, about 471 per day. These fires caused an average of 530 deaths, 5,270 injuries and \$1.1 billion in property damage each year. Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, followed by Christmas Day, Christmas Eve, and the day before Thanksgiving.

Unattended cooking on ranges or cooktops was the cause of the majority of home cooking fires and over 80% of cooking fire deaths and injuries. Over one-third of those killed were sleeping at the time and more than one-third of non-fatal injuries occurred when people tried to control the fire themselves.

Cooking safety tips

- If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the kitchen while food is cooking and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.
- Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children
- Be alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stove or stovetop
- Never use extension cords for cooking appliances, circuits can overload and cause a fire.
- Deep fat turkey fryers are very dangerous. If you use one, keep it at least 15 feet from buildings and anything that can catch fire. Don't use in a garage or on a deck. Watch the fryer carefully, the oil will continue to heat until it catches fire. To avoid spillover, don't overfill the fryer.
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.

If you have a cooking fire

- Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
- Call 9-1-1 **AFTER** you leave.
- Keep a lid nearby when you're cooking to smother small grease fires. Smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
- Don't use water or flour on a grease fire, it will cause the fire to spread. Baking soda or a Class B extinguisher may be used for small fires.
- Your instinct may be to move a pot on fire to a different part of your kitchen or outside. This could splash the oil on yourself or throughout your kitchen spreading the fire. It's best to keep the pot where it is.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.
- If you try to fight the fire, be sure others are getting out and you have a clear way out.

It's that time of year again -- Change your clocks change your batteries!

You should test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month. If your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are powered by batteries, they should be replaced at least once annually while the alarm itself should be replaced once every 10 years. For 10-year lithium-powered alarms, you won't need to replace the battery. Instead, replace the entire alarm after 10 years have passed. If your alarm is hardwired into your home's electrical system, replace the backup battery at least once per year and replace the alarm itself once every 10 years. A good rule of thumb is to change your batteries when you change your clocks! Daylight saving time ends on November 3rd. Replace old batteries with fresh, high quality batteries to keep your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms ready to protect you all year-long.

For additional information on fire prevention and fire safety check out www.woodbridgefireprevention.org and www.nfpa.org/Public-Education