

Information Bulletin

Thanksgiving is the leading day for U.S. home cooking fires; NFPA offers tips and recommendations for enjoying a fire-safe holiday

November 13, 2017 – While Thanksgiving tops the charts for family and friends coming together to enjoy food and one another’s company, it’s also the leading day for U.S. home cooking fires. According to the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) latest “Home Fire Involving Cooking Equipment” report, nearly four times as many home cooking fires occurred on Thanksgiving Day in 2015 as on any other typical day of the year; the day before Thanksgiving represents the second-leading day for home cooking fires.

Between 2011 and 2015, U.S. fire departments responded to an annual average of 170,200 home structure fires involving cooking equipment, which resulted in 510 civilian fire deaths, 5,470 civilian fire injuries, and \$1.2 billion in direct property damage. Unattended cooking was, by far, the leading contributing factor in these fires and fire fatalities.

In that same five-year period, cooking equipment was involved in almost half (47%) of all reported home fire incidents. Cooking fires caused 20% of home fire deaths, and was the source of nearly half (45%) of the reported home fire injuries. In terms of direct property damage, 17% of damage resulting from cooking fires.

“At Thanksgiving, when people are cooking multiple dishes and entertaining guests, it’s easy to get distracted,” said Lorraine Carli, NFPA’s vice president of Outreach and Advocacy. “These distractions may prompt them to walk away from the kitchen or forget something is cooking on the stovetop or in the oven. These factors can all increase the likelihood of a cooking fire.”



Fortunately, Carli notes, there are many simple steps you can take to greatly reduce the risk of cooking fires on Thanksgiving and beyond. Following are NFPA tips and recommendations for cooking safely:

- Stay in the kitchen when cooking to keep a close eye on the food, especially when frying and sautéing with oil.
- Use a timer to keep track of cooking times, most notably when cooking a meal that takes a long time like roasting a turkey, baking a roast or simmering. Check the stove or oven frequently. Consider putting timers in different rooms so that you can hear them over music, football games, and party chatter.
- Stay alert and focused when cooking. To help minimize the risk of injury, avoid cooking when drinking alcohol or if you’re sleepy.
- Keep things that can catch fire like oven mitts, wooden utensils, food wrappers and towels away from the cooking area.
- Kids should stay 3 feet away from stovetops, as well as from hot food and liquids. The steam or splash from vegetables, or gravy could cause serious burns.

Frying turkeys at Thanksgiving has become more popular in recent years. However, NFPA discourages the use of turkey fryers, as they can lead to devastating burns, other injuries, and the destruction of property due to the extensive amount of hot oil used with fryers. NFPA urges those who prefer fried turkey to look instead for grocery stores, specialty food retailers and restaurants that sell deep fried turkeys.

Additional tips and resources can be found on NFPA’s Thanksgiving webpage (www.nfpa.org/public-education/by-topic/seasonal-fires/thanksgiving-safety). General cooking safety information including safety tip sheets, infographics, videos and more can be found on NFPA’s Cooking Fire Safety Central webpage (www.nfpa.org/cooking).

The “Home Fires Involving Cooking Equipment” report also provides home fire cooking statistics for other holidays such as Christmas, Christmas Eve, and the New Year.