



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Preparing a Holiday Feast: Take Necessary Precautions When Cooking**

The Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays will be here before you know it; a time when family and friends gather to celebrate and share in life's special moments that customarily consist of countless and delectable home-cooked meals.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), cooking fires is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries, in the U.S., with peak days being Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Many home cooking fires involve the stovetop due to unattended cooking as the common cause of these types of fires.

To keep you and your loved ones safe, during the holidays and throughout the year, follow these simple safety tips:

#### **Cooking Safety Tips**

- Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stove or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, boiling, or broiling food.
  - If you must leave the kitchen, for even a short period of time, turn off your range or cooktop.
- 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 your cooking area clean and free of combustible materials.
  - Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, or curtains — away from your stovetop.
  - Clean up spilled or splattered grease in the oven or on the cooktop; built up grease can catch fire.
- When cooking wear close-fitting clothing or short sleeves so your clothes won't catch on fire. Loose clothing can easily brush over a hot burner and catch fire.
- If cooking in a microwave:
  - Never attempt to heat articles that are not approved for use in a microwave.

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- Use only microwave-safe utensils and containers.
- Remove food from packaging before defrosting in a microwave oven.
- Never use recycled paper products in microwave ovens.
- Do not leave a microwave oven unattended when microwaving popcorn, since the heat buildup can cause fires.

### **Kitchen Fire Safety Tips**

Should a fire occur when cooking:

- On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the stove.
- For an oven fire, turn off the oven and keep the door closed.
- In a microwave, turn it off immediately. Then simply wait until the fire suffocates.
  - Never open the microwave door until you are absolutely certain the fire is out. If in doubt, call the fire department.

### **Additional Cooking Safety Tips**

- Use back burners and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove to prevent knocking the pots over or children pulling them down.
- Keep children away from the stove when cooking by using a safety gate for younger children and marking with tape a 3-foot “no-kid zone” for older children.
- Use oven mitts when cooking or handling hot food and drinks.
- Stir and test food cooked in the microwave before serving.
- Open heated containers away from you, back to front, to avoid being burned by hot escaping steam.

The Prince William County Fire & Rescue System Chief Tim Keen states, “To ensure your family get together during the holidays or anytime throughout the year, are filled with cherished moments, not memories of visits to the emergency room, take the necessary precautions when cooking, to protect them from fires, fire injuries, or worse.

For additional information on cooking fire safety, visit the National Fire Protection Association [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org) and the U.S. Fire Administration [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).

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