



PRESS RELEASE

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Make Cooking Safety Your Top Priority This Holiday Season

The winter holiday season has arrived and families, nationwide, will begin preparations in celebration of the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays. Homes will be filled with aromatic flavors and fragrances of food cooking in the kitchen as individuals hustle and bustle to prepare a loving and memorable feast for family and friends to share and delight in. During this festive season, the Prince William County Fire & Rescue System would like to remind families that the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries are cooking fires. These types of fires peak on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), many home cooking fires involve the stovetop/cooktop with unattended cooking as the common cause of these fires. To keep you and your loved ones safe, follow these simple cooking safety tips:

Cooking Safety Tips

- Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stove or stovetop/cooktop.
- 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 stovetop/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/cooktop.
 - Clean up spilled or splattered grease in the oven or on the stovetop/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/cooktop, 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 and simply wait until the fire suffocates.
 - **NEVER** open the microwave door until you are absolutely certain that 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 back to front and away from you.

Holidays are about special moments of jubilant events to be shared and cherished by family and friends, for many years to come, not memories of visits to the emergency room. Whether cooking during the holiday season or anytime throughout the year, take the necessary precautions to protect you and your loved ones from fires, fire injuries, or worse.

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

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