

COOKING SAFETY:

HOW TO PREVENT COOKING FIRES AND RELATED INJURIES

Why is cooking safety important?



- Cooking is the **leading** cause of house fires and house fire injuries.
- According to the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), **1 in 8** homes will have a cooking fire each year.

How many house fires are caused by cooking?



- In 2005, U.S. fire departments responded to **146,400** residential fires that involved cooking equipment. These fires caused **480** deaths, **4,690** fire injuries and **\$876** million in property damage (NFPA, 2008).

What are the main causes of cooking fires?

1. Leaving food cooking on the stovetop unattended.
2. Leaving burners or ovens on after cooking.
3. Placing combustible materials too close to heat sources.
4. Wearing loose-fitting sleeves near hot burners.



What other factors can start cooking fires?

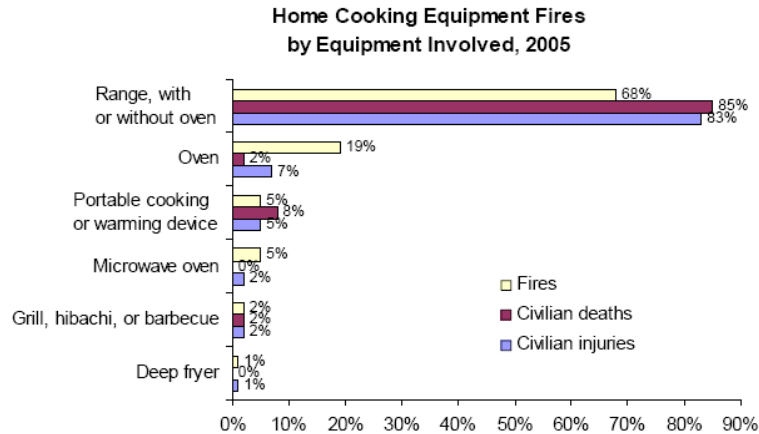


- Nearly all cooking equipment fires start with the ignition of food, other cooking materials (e.g., grease, cooking oil), or other items normally found or installed in a kitchen (e.g., cabinets, wall coverings, paper or plastic bags, curtains).
- 59% of reported home cooking fire injuries occurred when victims tried to fight the fire themselves (NFPA, 2008).



Where is the most common place for a residential fire to start?

- The majority of accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen. Ranges accounted for the largest share of home cooking fire incidents, followed by ovens, portable cooking devices, microwaves, grills, and deep fryers (see figure below).



(Figure Courtesy of NFPA, 2008)

What is the best way to prevent cooking fires?

8 Steps for Cooking Safety	
1	Always stay in the kitchen while cooking.
2	Keep anything that can catch fire, such as dishtowels, paper or plastic bags, potholders, and curtains at least 3 ft away from the stove top.
3	Before cooking, roll up sleeves and use oven mitts. Loose-fitting clothes can touch a burner and catch on fire. If you catch on fire - STOP, DROP, and ROLL.
4	Keep stove tops, ovens, and burners clean.
5	Always use cooking equipment tested and approved by a recognized testing facility.
6	Keep children and pets away from cooking areas by creating a three-foot "kid-free zone" around the stove
7	Monitor hot oil carefully and heat it slowly, keeping the pan lid and oven mitt close at hand. Guard against splattering grease.
8	Place objects where they cannot be pulled over or knocked over.

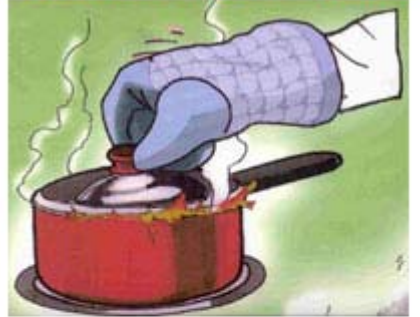
KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A COOKING FIRE

If your food starts burning on the stove:



- ✓ Turn off the burner.
- ✓ Do not move the pan.
- ✓ Put on a potholder or oven mitt.
- ✓ Slide a lid over the pan or use baking soda to smother the fire.
- ✓ Leave the lid on until the pot is cool.
- ✓ If you lift the lid too soon, the air will feed the flames and the smoke will set off the fire alarm.
- ✓ If you can't do this without being burned, then evacuate and activate the fire alarm.

Use a lid or baking soda to smother a pan fire!



If your food starts burning in a toaster oven or microwave:



- ✓ Turn the power off and/or unplug.
- ✓ Keep the door closed to smother the fire.
- ✓ If you open the door, the air will feed the flames and the smoke will set off the fire alarm.
- ✓ If you can't do this without being burned, then evacuate and activate the fire alarm.



If there is an oven fire:



- ✓ Turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you and your clothing.
- ✓ Have the oven serviced before you use it again.

If there is a grill fire:



- ✓ Always place the grill several feet away from a house or vehicle. If the fire gets out of control, it could quickly move to other nearby items.
- ✓ Be ready to extinguish flames and keep a phone close.
- ✓ Turn off the gas if the fire is in the grill itself. This will stop feeding the fire.
- ✓ Close the lid.
- ✓ Shut the gas tank off if the fire is in the hose itself. If you are unable to reach the knob, use the fire extinguisher and call 911. The fire may quickly move to the tank which would be extremely hazardous.
- ✓ Clear the area and call 911 if the fire is in the tank.

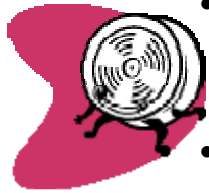
WHEN IN DOUBT, JUST GET OUT!!



- If someone is burned, cool the burn with cool water for 3 to 5 minutes. If the burn is bigger than your fist, or if you have any questions, seek medical attention right away.



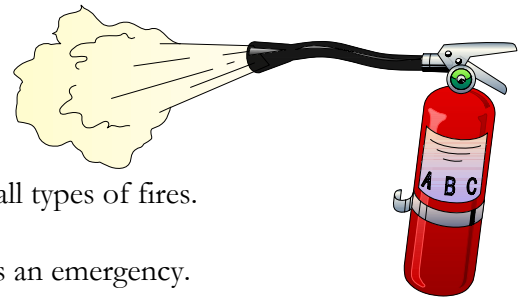
What kind of smoke detector should I use?



- Smoke detectors won't prevent a fire but they save lives by alerting you to smoke. If you don't have smoke detectors, install them now. Install a smoke detector in each sleeping room, outside each sleeping area, and on each level of your home.
- Test each smoke detector at least monthly.
- To prevent nuisance alarms during cooking, move smoke detectors farther from the kitchen and install a smoke alarm with a silence button.

Should I use a fire extinguisher?

- Fire extinguishers should be mounted in the kitchen.
- Purchase an ABC type extinguisher for extinguishing all types of fires.
- Learn how to use your fire extinguisher before there is an emergency.
- Remember, use an extinguisher on small fires only. If there is a large fire, get out immediately and call 911 from another location.
- Trying to fight a fire yourself when it's too large can cause far more extensive damage and can result in greater damage or unnecessary injury.



References and Additional Resources:

National Fire Protection Association. (2008). Cooking.
<http://www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=282&URL=Research+&+Reports/Factsheets/Home+safety/Cooking+safety>

National Fire Protection Association. (2008). Home Fires Involving Cooking Equipment.

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