

Kitchen and Outdoor Fire Safety

Whether you're hosting a festive get-together or just bringing along a dish, prevent kitchen fires and cook safely with these tips in mind:

- Keep flammable items away from the stovetop, including oven mitts, potholders, food packaging and dishtowels. Avoid wearing loose clothing, which could catch fire on burners.
- Do not leave cooking unattended. When using the stovetop, stay in the kitchen so you can keep an eye on the food. If you have something in the oven, check on it frequently; set a timer as a reminder.
- Keep the floor clear of any tripping hazards, such as bags or toys. Pets should be kept in another room where they won't risk getting underfoot.
- Stay alert while cooking on the stove. If you're tired or have consumed alcohol, let someone else take over.
- Exercise caution when handling hot liquids and foods, as steam or splashes can cause serious burns, as well as the trays, pans and serving dishes they are in.

When it is time to set the table, place hot liquids and foods in the center of the table, where they are less likely to be knocked over.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A COOKING FIRE

When a fire ignites in the kitchen, our first instinct may be to pick up the flaming pot or pan and attempt to move it into the sink or outside. However, this is dangerous and can result in splashing hot oil on yourself and your home, spreading the fire further. Should a small fire ignite, follow these safety guidelines:

- Do not pour water on it. Water can cause oil to splash, which can not only hurt you but also spread the fire.
- Slide a lid over the pan to smother the fire and turn off the stovetop, leaving the pan covered until it has completely cooled; alternatively, baking soda can also be used to extinguish small grease fires.
- If there is an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the oven door closed.

For larger fires with extensive smoke and heat that are rapidly spreading, get out. Leave the kitchen and close the door behind you to contain the flames. Once you are safe, call 911 or a local emergency number.

Take your loved ones with you, but do not re-enter your home to get your cellphone, computer or other personal belongings. You may not have a second chance to get out safely.

COOKING FIRE PREVENTION

Next time you're huddled around the fire, stay cozy and safe with these tips:

- Be sure you are at least 25 feet away from structures or anything else that can burn before building a fire. Choose an open, level location and clear away any dry leaves and sticks, overhanging branches and shrubs.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene or any other flammable liquid to start a fire. Instead, use a match or lighter to ignite tinder (small twigs and dry leaves); add larger sticks and pieces of dry wood.
- Keep the fire small and controlled and never leave it unattended.
- Do not stand too close to the fire or play around it, and do not attempt to jump over it. Keep an eye on children and pets so they don't get too close to the flames either.
- Keep a hose, a bucket of water, or a shovel and dirt or sand nearby to extinguish the fire once you're finished. Be sure the fire is completely out before leaving the site — any remaining embers could ignite, with disastrous consequences.