

Top day for cooking fires

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is calling on cooks across the nation to include fire safety in their recipes because Thanksgiving is the leading day for home cooking fires. U.S. firefighters responded to roughly 1,300 home fires involving cooking equipment on Thanksgiving in 2007, roughly three times the daily average of cooking fires, according to NFPA.

“Incorporating fire safety into your holiday preparations can mean the difference between putting on a fantastic holiday feast for family and friends or having to call the fire department to put out a fire,” said NFPA’s Vice President of Communications Lorraine Carli.

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires. During 2003-2006, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 150,200 home structure fires involving cooking equipment per year, according to the newly released NFPA report Home Fires Involving Cooking Equipment. These fires caused an annual average of 500 civilian deaths, 4,660 civilian injuries, and \$756 million in direct property damage.

Other key findings from the report on fires during 2003-2006:

Cooking equipment was involved in 40 percent of all reported home fires, 17 percent of home fire deaths, 36 percent of home civilian injuries, and 12 percent of the direct property damage resulting from home fires.

Unattended cooking was by far the leading contributing factor in these fires. Something that could catch fire was too close to the equipment ranked second and unintentionally turned on or not turned off ranked third.

Three-fifths (57 percent) of reported home cooking fire injuries occurred when victims tried to fight the fire themselves.

NFPA recommends the following cooking safety tips:

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—Cook with Caution

—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, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

—If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.

—Keep anything that can catch fire—oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains away from your stovetop.

If you have a cooking fire, keep a lid nearby when you're cooking to smother small grease fires. Smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.

For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

If you try to fight the fire, be sure others are getting out and you have a clear way out.

When in doubt, just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number after you leave.

NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building, and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of the international nonprofit organization is to reduce the

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worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education. Visit NFPA's Web site at www.nfpa.org.