



NEWS RELEASE

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Officials warn of increased fire danger on Thanksgiving

Whether you choose the oven, the barbecue pit or the fryer, Lockhart Fire Rescue is urging local Thanksgiving cooks not to wing it when it comes to safely cooking their turkeys this year.

According to the National Fire Protection Agency, more than three times as many home cooking fires occur on Thanksgiving Day as on a typical day of the year. On Thanksgiving in 2017, 1,600 home cooking fires were reported nationwide, reflecting a 238 percent increase over the daily average.

The leading culprit in these fires was unattended cooking, NFPA officials said. According to the NFPA, cooking is the leading cause of home fires annually, accounting for 49 percent of all U.S. home fires and 45 percent of reported home fire injuries. Cooking is also the second-leading cause of all home-fire deaths, annually accounting for 22 percent of such fatalities.

“With people preparing multiple dishes, often with a lot of guests and other distractions in and around the kitchen, it’s easy to see why the number of home cooking fires increases so dramatically,” said Lockhart Fire Rescue Chief Randy Jenkins. “Fortunately, the vast majority of cooking fires are highly preventable with a little added awareness, and by taking simple steps to minimize those risks.”

Lockhart Fire Rescue recommends Thanksgiving cooks heed the following NFPA tips to stay safe during the holiday:

- Never leave the kitchen while cooking on the stovetop. Some types of cooking, especially those that involve frying or sautéing with oil, need continuous attention.
- When cooking a turkey, stay in your home and check on it regularly.
- Make use of timers to keep track of cooking times, particularly for foods that require longer cook times.
- Keep things that can catch fire like oven mitts, wooden utensils, food wrappers, and towels at least three feet away from the cooking area.

- Avoid long sleeves and hanging fabrics, which can ignite if exposed to a heat source.
- Always cook with a lid beside your pan. If you have a fire, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the burner. Do not remove the cover because the fire could start again. Let the pan cool for a long time. Never throw water or use a fire extinguisher on the fire.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed. Only open the door once you're confident the fire is completely out, standing to the side as you do. Dial 911 in case of emergency.
- Keep children at least three feet away from the stove. Kids should also stay away from hot foods and liquids, as steam or splash from these items could cause severe burns.

Turkey fryers, although used outdoors, also pose a great fire risk. The U.S. Fire Administration asks people using turkey fryers to consider the following dangers or risks:

- Turkey fryers can easily tip over, spilling hot cooking oil over a large area.
- An overfilled cooking pot will cause cooking oil to spill when the turkey is put in, and a partially frozen turkey will cause cooking oil to splatter when put in the pot.
- Without thermostat controls, deep fryers can overheat oil to the point of starting a fire.
- The sides of the cooking pot, lid and pot handles can become dangerously hot.