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Home cooking fires peak on Thanksgiving Day NFA urges caution when preparing holiday meals

November 14, 2006 — As Americans prepare Thanksgiving meals, it is imperative that they keep safety in mind since cooking fires are more likely to occur on Thanksgiving than on any other day of the year. The incidence of home cooking fires is roughly three times the daily average on Thanksgiving. In 2004, cooking equipment was involved in 1,040 reported home structure fires on Thanksgiving which was three times the daily average that year.

NFA studies show cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries. Hundreds of Americans are killed each year due to home cooking fires and thousands more are injured. Cooking fires also cause roughly half a billion dollars in direct property damage to the homes and the belongings inside.

It can be easy to get wrapped up in entertaining guests, but it is important to remember to stay in the kitchen and monitor meal preparation closely as most cooking fires start because cooking has been left unattended.

People may look to vary the traditional turkey entrée by using a turkey fryer, but due to the unique fire and injury hazards associated with this specific piece of equipment, NFA recommends against their use.

The deep-frying cooking process requires that up to five gallons of oil be heated before placing the turkey into the device. Tests have shown that a number of available turkey fryer devices are not sturdy and can easily tip over, allowing hot oil to spill, creating a serious risk of fire or scald burn from contact. There also have been reports of turkey fryers overheating, which can also lead to hot oil spilling or splattering outside the fryer, which is again a recipe for dangerous fires, serious injuries, and property loss.

If having fried turkey is a must this Thanksgiving, NFA recommends that consumers turn to commercial sources where professionals will prepare their entrée with a safety and skill unlikely to be matched at home. Some supermarkets and restaurants accept orders for fried turkeys during the holiday season.

NFA offers these tips for safer cooking:

Stand by your pan

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food.
- If you must leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, boiling or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that the stove or oven is on.
- Keep in mind that you should avoid wearing loose clothing or dangling sleeves while cooking. Loose clothing can catch fire if it comes in contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

No kids allowed

- Keep kids away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet (1 meter) around the stove.
- If you have young children, use the stove's back burners whenever possible, and turn pot handles inward to reduce the risk that pots with hot contents will be knocked over.
- Never hold a small child while cooking.

Keep it clean

- Keep anything that can catch fire—pot holders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels or curtains—away from your stove top.
- Clean up food and grease from burners and the stovetop.

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 worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

URL: <http://www.nfpa.org/newsReleaseDetails.asp?categoryId=1394&itemId=31024>

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