

# Cooking Safety

Fire caused by cooking remains the leading cause of home fires and injuries in the United States. Why do these fires happen? Frequently it's because people leave food unattended. Often the fire starts within 15 minutes of cooking, showing that there is no safe period to leave cooking unattended. A National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Study found, on average there were 117,100 home fires involving cooking equipment each year. These fires resulted in over 370 civilian deaths, up to 4,290 injuries, and \$453 million in property damage.

An independent survey found that over 12.3 million minor fires are not reported each year. The damage from most of these fires were confined to the cooking equipment, but were responsible for an estimated 642,000 injuries and illness.

Cooking fires are not confined to the family kitchen, cooking fires can occur on grills, turkey fryers, and any open flame or heat source used for cooking.

Cooking fires are dangerous because people do not know how to put them out properly. Cooking fires should be smothered-by covering a pan with a lid or closing a door to oven.

The Excelsior Fire District recommends these steps to reduce the risk of cooking fires:

- **DON'T LEAVE COOKING FOOD ON THE STOVE TOP UNATTENDED. Keep a watch on food cooking in the oven or microwave.**
- **Do not cook with loose or long sleeves that can dangle onto stove burners. Do not keep spices, salt & pepper on the back of the stove, your clothing can catch on fire when you reach for these or similar items used for cooking.**
- **If your cloths catch on fire, STOP DROP and ROLL!**
- **Keep combustibles away from cooking surfaces. Pot holders, rags, curtains, bags, dish towels, and kitchen appliances should be kept a good distance away from any open cooking flame.**
- **Turn pot handles in towards the middle of the stove. A pot handle can be bumped, grabbed by a child, or tipped by a pet.**
- **Enforce a "kid-free zone" 3 feet around any cooking area. Keep pets from underfoot. Thousands of kids and pets suffer burns every year.**

Keep turkey fryers and grills a safe distance away from buildings. Never use any outside cooking appliance under the eaves of a building. Never use gasoline to start a grill! In a turkey fryer, only use the frying oil recommend by the manufacturer.