

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEEP-FRIED TURKEY FIRE DEMONSTRATES HOLIDAY COOKING DANGER

COOKING RELATED FIRE DEATHS DOWN IN 2019

JACKSON, Miss. – On Monday, November 25, 2019, the State Fire Marshal’s Office demonstrated the dangers of over-filling a turkey fryer with grease and cooking a turkey that is not fully thawed.

Members of the Fire Marshal’s Office, State Fire Academy and Jackson Metro area fire officials joined Fire Marshal Mike Chaney for the demonstration.

During the demonstration, firefighters placed a partially frozen turkey in a fryer filled with too much hot oil. Because the water and oil don’t mix, the oil reacts violently, overflows and catches fire when it reaches the flame below the fryer. The demonstration is an extreme example of how unsafe or unattended cooking puts you at risk of a fire.

Unattended cooking has caused three fire deaths so far this year statewide. That’s a downturn from 10 deaths in 2018, that were cooking-fire related.

“Many cooks could become distracted during the excitement of the holiday,” said State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney. “But if you stay alert, and stand by your pan while cooking, you could prevent a fire.”

Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Make your home safer by installing multiple smoke alarms. If you need smoke alarms, ask your local fire department.

Use these safety tips from the State Fire Marshal’s Office when preparing your Thanksgiving meal:

- Be on alert. If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don’t use the stovetop or oven.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food.
- If you must leave the kitchen for even a short amount 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.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing or dangling sleeves while cooking. Loose clothing can catch fire if it gets too close to a gas flame or electric burner.

No kids allowed

- Keep kids away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet around the stove.

- If you have young children, use the stove's back burners whenever possible.
- Turn pot handles inward to reduce the risk that pots 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 stovetop.
- Clean up food and grease from burners and the stovetop.

If you have a fire

- Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
- Call 911 or the local emergency number after you leave. Be sure others are getting out and you have a clear way out.
- Keep a lid nearby 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 using a turkey fryer

- Fryers should be used outdoors, a safe distance from buildings and any other flammable materials.
- Some turkey fryers are designed for indoor use. If you use one of these, follow manufacturer directions carefully.
- Never use a fryer in a garage or on a wooden deck.
- Make sure fryers are used on a flat surface to reduce accidental tipping.
- Never leave the fryer unattended. If you do not watch the fryer carefully, the oil will continue to heat until it catches fire.
- Never let children or pets near the fryer even if it is not in use. The oil inside can remain dangerously hot hours after use.
- To avoid oil spillover, do not overfill the fryer.
- Use well-insulated potholders or oven mitts when touching pot or lid handles. If possible, wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from oil splatter.
- Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and dried before cooking. Be careful with marinades, because oil and water do not mix, and water causes oil to spill over causing a fire or even an explosion hazard.
- The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture recommends you thaw a turkey 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. Never use water to extinguish a grease fire.
- The Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office recommends, when using a propane fryer, using a hose at least 6 feet long to distance the propane tank from the fryers flame.

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