

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2020

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COOKING RELATED FIRE DEATHS UP SLIGHTLY IN 2020

JACKSON, Miss. – Unattended cooking has caused six fire deaths so far this year statewide. That's up slightly from four cooking fire related deaths in 2019. However, the numbers are down from 12 cooking fire related deaths in 2018.

"Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires," said State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney. "Pay attention while cooking and never leave cooking food unattended. Make your home safer by installing multiple smoke alarms and ask your local fire department for help if you need smoke alarms."

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, baking, or broiling food. Always stand by your pan.
- 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 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, pan and pot 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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