

Cooking Safety Tips from West Metro Fire-Rescue District Watch What You Heat!

West Metro Fire-Rescue District is taking cooking very seriously. Our number 1 fire problem in Crystal and New Hope is cooking. The fire calls range from burnt food to a full-blown grease fire on the stove. The Fire Prevention Personnel would like provide you with some information on how to be safe while cooking in your kitchen. It seems that a big problem is unattended cooking. Here are some facts from NFPA on cooking fires:

Between 1999-2002, there were 114,000 reported home fires associated with cooking, which resulted in about 290 deaths and 4,380 injuries. Many cooking fires are due to being unattended. Three in 10 reported cooking fires start in the kitchen, more than any other place in the home. Two out of three reported home cooking fires start on stove or range. Electric ranges or stoves have a higher risk of fires, injuries and property damage, compared to gas ranges or stoves, but gas ranges or stoves have a higher risk of fire deaths.

Here are some Safety tips when it comes to cooking:

Keeping it clean.....

- Keep cooking area clean of grease and oil buildup. **Cooking grease and oil ignite easily and burns rapidly.** Slide a lid over the pan to smother a small pan fire. Do not use water or flour on a grease fire. Do not try to carry a burning pan outside or to the sink. You could accidentally spread the fire. Keep a lid, and a 2A10BC fire extinguisher handy in the kitchen.
- Keep cooking areas clear of combustibles such as potholders, towels, rags, food packaging, etc...
- Don't use stovetop as a countertop for storage of combustibles.
- Keep appliance cords up on counter tops too. Check those cords regularly for frayed or broken spots. Replace damaged cords or appliances.

While cooking

- Keep children and pets out of cooking area while cooking
- Never leave cooking unattended
- Keep panhandles turned inward where they cannot be spilled
- Wear tight fitting sleeves, and don't reach across burners.
- Shield yourself from steam when uncovering food, especially microwave servings. Steam can cause serious burns.
- **Never leave cooking unattended.** If you must leave the kitchen for some reason, turn the heat off and take something with you to remind you that you have something cooking.

When things go wrong....

- Remain calm
- Pan fire, while wearing an oven mitt slid a lid over the pan and turn off stove
- Oven fire, keep the door closed and turn off the oven then unplug
- Microwave fire, keep the door closed and unplug the oven.

West Metro Fire Rescue-Districts Fire Prevention personnel says, "Following these simple tips may sound like common sense, but we need to think about these things, because obviously the result of being complacent in the kitchen is very tragic." Keeping your family and home safe from fire in the responsibility of everyone in the home.

If anyone has any concerns or would like some kitchen fire safety training please feel free to contact West Metro Fire Rescue District Fire Inspectors Shelby Wolf or Aaron Surratt at (763) 230-7006 or (763) 230-7005.