

Too hot to handle: Putting a lid on kitchen fires

More fires begin in the kitchen than any other room in the home. In fact, residential cooking is one of the leading causes of fire-related deaths. The majority of kitchen fires begin with cooking equipment. Number one on the list of fire sources are stoves, including microwave ovens.

Be constantly alert to cooking habits

- Keep pot handles turned toward the back of the stove: a small child could pull on a handle extending out at the front of a stove and be burned or scalded by the pot's contents. Avoid loose clothing while cooking: loose clothing can brush heating elements and easily catch fire.
- Never leave food cooking unattended on the stove.
- Never store frequently used items above the stove where you may be burned reaching over the hot stove to get them.
- Remove pans of cooking fat or oils from the stove when not in use - it's easy to accidentally turn on the wrong burner.

In case of a grease or pan fire

- Turn off the stove. Smother flames with a pot lid or larger pan, if possible. Protect your hand with an oven mitt or wrapped dish towel.
- Use of an approved portable fire extinguisher only if you are familiar with its safe operation.
- Never throw water or use flour on a grease fire.
- In case of an oven fire, close the oven door and turn off the oven. Never touch or attempt to carry a flaming pot. The contents may spill, spread or burn you.
- If the fire is not brought under control immediately, get you and your family out and call 9-1-1.

What other steps can I take to prevent kitchen fires?

- Make stove controls easy to read from a distance - perhaps mark "off" with a bright red dot.
- Examine the stove and oven, toasters, coffee makers, and other cooking devices for signs of cracking, fraying or wear on cords and plugs.
- Look for signs of overheating.
- Check for recognized testing laboratory labels to show that the unit has been well designed.
- Keep matches out of reach of children. Explain the dangers to your children.