

HELP US HELP YOU IN THE PREVENTION OF COOKING FIRES - LOOK WHEN YOU COOK

For Release

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Labor Day, the last holiday of the summer, is just around the corner. Since COVID-19, the majority of individuals and their families have been relegated to their homes. Although restaurants and entertainment venues are open, they are operating within limited capacity; therefore, families have resorted to cooking more at home in the kitchen, firing up their smoker/grill or a combination of both this summer.

With an increase in cooking there's the potential for an increase in cooking fires; the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries. Chief Tim Keen, of the Prince William County Fire and Rescue System, urges residents to take the necessary precautions when cooking to reduce the number of home fires and home fire injuries. Chief Keen reminds residents that, "Cooking fires are preventable by simply being more attentive when using cooking materials and equipment."

To protect you and your loved ones, when cooking throughout the year, follow these simple safety tips:

Look When You Cook

- Stay in the kitchen if you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food.
- Turn off the stove, even if you leave the kitchen for a short period of time.
- Remain in the home if you are simmering, baking, or roasting food.
 - Check it regularly.
 - Use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Use oven mitts when cooking or handling hot food and drinks.
- Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stove, i.e. oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains.
- **NEVER** throw water on a grease fire! If possible, cover the pot/pan with a lid and smother the fire.
- Have a kid-free zone of at least 3 feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is being prepared or carried.

If you have a cooking fire

- Keep a lid nearby when you're cooking to smother small grease fires.
 - Smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan.
 - Turn off the stovetop.
 - Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.

- **DO NOT** attempt to fight the fire! Just Get Out!
 - More than half of reported non-fatal home cooking fire injuries occurred when people tried to fight the fire themselves.
 - When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
 - Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number **AFTER** you leave.
- For an oven fire:
 - Turn off the heat.
 - Keep the oven door closed.

Grilling Safety

Before firing up the grill, remember to implement safe grilling practices each and every time you use your grill:

- **DO NOT** use grills or smokers within 15 feet of a single-family and townhouse residence.
- Constantly attend the grill or smoker when in use.
- Use long-handled grilling tools to provide clearance from heat and flames when cooking.
- Periodically check and remove grease/fat buildup in trays below the grill. The grease/fat can ignite from the grill's heat.
- Maintain a three (3) foot safety zone around grill or smoker when in use and during cool down.
- Only use metal containers to dispose of charcoal hot ashes and store at least 10 feet away from your home and any nearby buildings.

For more information on grill safety for apartments and condominiums in Prince William County, visit <http://www.pwccgov.org/government/dept/FR/fmo/Pages/Grill-Safety-for-Apartments-and-Condominiums.aspx>.

Chief Keen would like to remind residents to install smoke alarms in the bedrooms and throughout every level of the home; working smoke alarms save lives (www.pwccgov.org/SmokeAlarms). You double your chances of surviving a home fire with working smoke alarms compared to homes without working smoke alarms.

For more information on home cooking safety, visit the National Fire Protection Association www.nfpa.org and the U.S. Fire Administration www.usfa.fema.gov.