



Cooking is identified as the leading cause of home fires

Cooking was involved in an estimated 146,400 home structure fires in the United States in 2005, according to a report released by National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Cooking fires accounted for 40 percent of the home structure fires in 2005, and these cooking fires resulted in 480 deaths, 4,690 injuries, and \$876 million in direct property damage.

According to the report, cooking equipment left unattended was a factor in ignition in 38 percent of home structure fires for 2002-2005. Unattended cooking was the leading contributing factor in home cooking fires, followed by combustibles too close to a heat source, and equipment being unintentionally turned on or not turned off.

Cooking was also the leading cause of home fire injuries, accounting for 36 percent of home structure fire injuries in 2005. These injuries were especially likely to occur during attempts to fight the fire. In home structure fires involving cooking equipment for 2002-2005, 59 percent of injuries occurred while fighting the fire, compared to 35 percent of injuries in all other types of home structure fires.

Home cooking fires peak between 5 and 7 p.m. Extra cooking, as on major U.S. holidays, often means extra home cooking fires. Typically, more cooking fires occur on Thanksgiving than on any other day of the year.

The Presidio of Monterey Fire Department offers the following safety tips.

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- To prevent cooking fires, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.
- Keep anything that can catch fire – potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, boxes, food packaging, towels or curtains – away from your stovetop.
- Keep the stovetop, burners and oven clean.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and nearby countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.
- Wear short, close fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and can catch fire if it comes in contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

Any questions may be directed to the POM fire prevention office at 242-7544.

