

16. Cooking Fire Safety

Cooking up fire safety

Keep your kitchen from becoming a fire statistic with these handy tips

Did you know that cooking fires continue to be the number one cause of home fires and home fire injuries in Alberta? Most kitchen fires can be avoided by paying attention to cooking in the kitchen. Follow these safety tips to avoid a kitchen fire.

In the kitchen

- Check on your cooking regularly and use a timer to remind you when your food is done cooking. If you have a smartphone, you probably have a timer.
- Stay in the kitchen when food is frying, grilling, simmering, baking, roasting or boiling. If you leave the kitchen, even for a short period of time, turn off the stovetop.
- Stay alert. If you're sleepy, fatigued or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it's best to avoid cooking, both from a fire-safety and finger-safety perspective.
- Keep children and pets away from cooking areas. If kids want to help, guide them with an eye to safety, making sure they know to stay away from heat sources and sharp objects. Little fingers can quickly and unexpectedly move onto cutting boards. Go slowly, and devote your full attention to the task.
- Turn pot handles inward to avoid accidentally knocking over a pot. Make a habit of it.
- When frying foods, use a temperature-controlled fat fryer or an electric skillet designed for a maximum temperature of 200 C. Frying on a stovetop is likely the single most hazardous cooking activity seen regularly by fire departments.
- Keep all combustible items away from the stovetop. Same goes for keeping appliances like toasters, kettles and toaster ovens away from walls or anything else that could be damaged or ignited by heat.
- Avoid wearing loose-fitting clothing or dangling sleeves while cooking.
- Clean food and grease from stovetops. Keep the burners, oven and exhaust fan filters and ducts clean.
- Before turning it on, double-check the oven for anything that may have been left inside.

Microwave safety tips

- Plug a microwave directly into the wall socket. NEVER use an extension cord!
- Use only microwave-safe containers to heat food.
- Cool food for a minute or more before removing it from the microwave and use potholders.
- Open microwave containers slowly to avoid scalds from hot steam escaping from the containers.
- Never use aluminum foil or metal objects in a microwave.

In case of fire...

- If a small fire starts in the pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan, and turning off the heat.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from spreading and possibly burning you or your clothes.

- Keep a multi-purpose fire extinguisher in the kitchen in case of an emergency. Make sure you know how to use it before an emergency happens.