



**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Holiday Feasts Start with Kitchen Safety First**

The winter holiday season has arrived. Families nationwide prepare for holiday celebrations with food as a loving and memorable feast for family and friends to share and enjoy. During this festive season, the Prince William County Fire & Rescue System would like to remind families that the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries is cooking fires. These types of fires peak on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), many home cooking fires involve the stovetop/cooktop due to unattended cooking, the common cause of these fires. To keep you and your loved ones safe, follow these simple cooking safety tips:

**Cooking Safety Tips**

- Be alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stove or stovetop/cooktop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, boiling, or broiling food.
  - If you must leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off your range or stovetop/cooktop.
- If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the kitchen while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep your cooking area clean and free of combustible materials.
  - Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, or curtains — away from your stovetop/cooktop.
  - Clean up spilled or spattered grease in the oven or on the stovetop/cooktop; built-up grease can catch fire.
- When cooking wear close-fitting clothing or short sleeves so your clothes won't catch fire. Loose clothing can easily brush over a hot burner and catch fire.
- If cooking in a microwave:
  - **NEVER** attempt to heat articles that are not approved for use in a microwave.

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- Use only microwave-safe utensils and containers.
- Remove food from packaging before defrosting in a microwave oven.
- **NEVER** use recycled paper products in microwave ovens.
- **DO NOT** leave a microwave oven unattended when microwaving popcorn, since the heat buildup can cause fires.

### **Kitchen Fire Safety Tips**

Should a fire occur:

- On the stovetop/cooktop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the stove.
- In an oven, turn off the oven and keep the door closed.
- In a microwave, turn it off immediately and simply wait until the fire suffocates.
  - **NEVER** open the microwave door until you are absolutely certain the fire is out. If in doubt, call the fire department.

### **Additional Cooking Safety Tips**

- Use back burners and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove to prevent knocking the pots over or children pulling them down.
- Keep children away from the stove when cooking by using a safety gate for younger children and marking, with tape, a 3-foot “no-kid zone” for older children.
- Use oven mitts when cooking or handling hot food and drinks.
- Stir and test food cooked in the microwave before serving.
- Open heated containers back to front and away from you.

Holidays are about special moments of jubilant events to be shared and cherished by family and friends, for years to come, not memories of visits to the emergency room. Whether cooking during the holiday season or any time throughout the year, take the necessary precautions to protect you and your loved ones from fires, fire injuries, or worse.

For additional information on cooking fire safety, visit the National Fire Protection Association [nfpa.org](https://www.nfpa.org) and the U.S. Fire Administration [usfa.fema.gov](https://www.usfa.fema.gov).

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