

Put out kitchen-fire hazards National Home Fire Safety Week is coming

The following article was submitted by the Canada Safety Council.

The kitchen is a laboratory for delicious and creative culinary experiments, but it can quickly become a danger zone because of cooking fires.

Fires claim eight lives each week in Canada, according to Fire Prevention Canada.

Almost three-quarters of those deaths happen as a result of residential fires, and many of those residential fires start in the kitchen.

Cooking fires are also the leading cause of home fire injuries. It is not possible to know the full extent of residential damage or injuries caused by kitchen fires, as many incidents are not reported to local emergency services.

For National Home Fire Safety Week, from Nov. 24 to 30, the Canada Safety Council is working to raise awareness that residential kitchen fires are preventable. With the approaching holiday season, it is timely to remind Canadians that there are many precautions they should take to reduce their risk of kitchen-fire related damage, injuries and death. Being aware of potential hazards and proactively managing those risks are the best defenses.

Tips to prevent kitchen fires
and injuries

? Kitchen fires can start and spread in seconds. Stay in the kitchen when cooking, especially when using grease or when cooking food at high temperatures.

? When using the stove, wear tight-fitting clothes or rolled up sleeves. Loose or dangling clothing can easily catch fire.

? Keep combustible items such as dishcloths, paper towels and pot holders a safe distance from the stove. As a rule, if it's not a pot or pan, it doesn't belong on the stovetop.

? Don't be a distracted chef. Be conscious of distractions that take you out of the kitchen. If you need to answer the door or have an extended phone conversation, for example, shut the stove off first.

? Turn pot-handles inward toward the back of the stove. If you are impaired ? whether by alcohol, medication, a lack of sleep or something else ? do not use the stove, oven or other cooking appliances.

? Keep proper-fitting lids close by for each pot or pan you have on the stove. If a pot or pan catches fire, put a lid on it to smother the flames. Do not attempt to move a flaming pot or pan away from the stove, as that may fan the flames and spread the fire.

? Never try to put a grease fire out with water. If possible, cover the pan with a lid to smother the flames; use baking soda on shallow grease fires. If you can't control the fire immediately, get yourself and your family out fast, and call 9-1-1.

? Built-up grease can easily catch fire, so clean the burner pans and stovetop regularly.

? A thermostatically-controlled electric skillet or a deep fryer is the safest way to deep fry foods.

? Have working smoke alarms on every level of the house and near all sleeping areas. Check these alarms often to ensure they are in good working order. If you have battery-operated smoke alarms, replace the batteries when you spring forward for Daylight Savings Time, and again when you fall back.

? Have a working fire extinguisher located away from the stove but in the kitchen, or within close reach of the kitchen. Know how to use the extinguisher.

? Use heat-proof oven mitts when moving a hot pan or pot to prevent burns. Keep these oven mitts in a convenient location.

? When using the oven, open the oven door all the way before putting something in or taking something out. This will prevent the door from closing and pinning your arm between the door and the oven.

? If a fire starts in the microwave, keep the door closed and unplug the unit.

? Never use a cooking appliance with a frayed or cracked electrical cord.

? Do not overload electrical outlets or circuits by plugging in and using multiple appliances at the same time.

? Teach children about kitchen fire safety. Children who are learning about cooking should be supervised by a responsible adult at all times.

? After you unplug a cooking appliance, make sure electrical cords are not dangling from countertops, where they could be pulled on by small children.

? If you sustain a burn, run cool water over the wound for three to five minutes. Seek medical attention if the burn is severe.

? When you finish cooking, promptly turn off the stove burners, oven or cooking appliance. Get into the habit of double-checking that appliances are turned off before you leave the kitchen.