

NFPA Fact Sheets

Cooking safety

Fire Prevention Tips:

- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Never leave food cooking unattended.
- Keep paper or plastic bags and food packaging, potholders, towels, etc away from the stove burners, toaster-ovens, microwaves, etc. The majority of cooking fires start with the ignition of these types of items.
- Wear short, close fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking to prevent your clothing from catching on fire.

If your food starts burning on the stove:

- Turn off the burner
- Put on a potholder or oven mitt
- Slide a lid over the pan
- Leave the lid on until the pot is cool.
- If you lift the lid too soon, the air will feed the flames and the smoke will set off the fire alarm.
- If you can't do this without being burned, then evacuate and activate the fire alarm.

If your food starts burning in a toaster oven or microwave:

- Turn the power off and/ or unplug.
- Keep the door closed to smother the fire.
- If you open the door, the air will feed the flames and the smoke will set off the fire alarm.
- If you can't do this without being burned, then evacuate and activate the fire alarm.

Cooking Safety Tips:

- Turn pot handles inward so you don't knock the pot over and children can't grab the handles.
- Never use a wet oven mitt, because you could be scalded if the moisture in the mitt is heated.
- Food cooked in a microwave can be dangerously hot. Remove the lids or other coverings from microwaved food carefully to prevent steam burns.
- Keep children and pets away from cooking areas by creating a three-foot (one-meter) "kid-free zone" around the stove.

Facts & Figures

- From 1999 to 2002, there were 114,000 reported home fires associated with cooking equipment. Every year there were 290 deaths and 4,380 injuries.
- Cooking fires are the #1 cause of home fires and home fire injuries. [A large percentage of fire alarms in MIT dormitories are caused by cooking. This is also true in campus housing nationwide.]
- 3 in every 10 reported home fires start in the kitchen – more than any other place in the home.
- Many fires also occur in faculty and staff offices because coffee makers, microwaves, toaster ovens, etc. are prevalent.