

State Fire Marshal: “Thanksgiving is the #1 day for home fires in Massachusetts”

“State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey is urging residents to make fire safety a priority in the kitchen as we approach Thanksgiving Day, the number one day for home fires in Massachusetts.

“Each year, we see about twice as many fires on Thanksgiving as on the next-closest day,” State Fire Marshal Ostroskey said. “Don’t let a fire ruin this special time with your family and loved ones. Practice fire safety when cooking and heating your home, and be sure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that can alert you to danger.”

Cooking Safety Tips

There were 678 Thanksgiving Day fires in Massachusetts from 2017 to 2021, and 87% of them started with cooking activities at home. These Thanksgiving Day fires caused seven civilian injuries, seven fire service injuries, and more than \$3 million in estimated losses. State Fire Marshal Ostroskey offered cooking safety tips that everyone can follow to stay fire-safe in the kitchen this year:

- Be sure your oven is empty before turning it on.
- Keep flammable items away from the stovetop.
- Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Turn pot handles inward over the stove.

Remember to “stand by your pan” and stay in the kitchen when boiling, frying, or broiling.

- Use a timer when baking or roasting and never leave the house with the oven running.
- The best way to respond to a stovetop fire is to “put a lid on it” and turn off the heat.
- The best way to respond to an oven or broiler fire is to keep the oven doors closed and turn off the heat.
- If the fire is not quickly snuffed out, leave the house and call 9-1-1 from outside.

Thanksgiving 2021

Residential cooking fires on Thanksgiving Day dropped by more than 20% last year, falling from 127 in 2020 to 97 in 2021.

After a devastating fire in New Bedford on Thanksgiving 2020 that caused severe injuries and displaced almost 30 people, there were no fires attributed to turkey fryers last year. Fire safety experts strongly discourage the use of outdoor gas-fueled turkey fryers that immerse the turkey in hot oil. There are no outdoor turkey fryers that have a listing from an independent testing laboratory such as UL or ETL, and the risk of hot oil spilling or igniting is high. The National Fire Protection Association states that home use of “turkey fryers that use cooking oil, as currently designed, are not suitable for safe use by even a well-informed and careful consumer.” They recommend using new “oil-less” turkey fryers.

Gas Ovens: A Source of Carbon Monoxide

Generally, the confined space of a closed gas oven used for cooking does not produce enough carbon monoxide (CO) to present any dangers, but it can present a hazard if used for several hours consecutively – such as when roasting a turkey. If you have a kitchen exhaust fan, use it; if not, crack a window for fresh air when using the gas oven for a prolonged period. Working CO alarms are vitally important to protect you and your loved ones from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Home Heating: #1 Source of Carbon Monoxide, #2 Cause of Fires

Heating is the second leading cause of fires on Thanksgiving

and the primary source of carbon monoxide in the home. Give your furnace an annual check-up, have chimneys cleaned and inspected by a professional at the beginning of heating season, and place space heaters on flat, level surfaces where in locations where they won't be bumped or tripped over. Keep a three-foot "circle of safety" free of anything that can burn around all heat sources.

For more information, contact your local fire department or the Department of Fire Services' Thanksgiving web page.

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