

Thanksgiving #1 Day for home fires in Massachusetts

As Thanksgiving nears, State Fire Marshal offers safety Tips: As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey offered a safety message in advance of the #1 day for residential fires in Massachusetts.

“Over the past five years, there have been more than twice as many fires on Thanksgiving as on the next-closest day,” State Fire Marshal Ostroskey said. “Thanksgiving is a time for coming together with family, but it’s also a time for fire safety. You can start now by making sure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that can alert you to danger.”

Cooking Safety Tips

There were 711 Thanksgiving Day fires from 2016 to 2020, and 86% of them started with cooking activities. These fires caused seven civilian injuries, eight fire service injuries, and more than \$3 million in estimated losses. State Fire Marshal Ostroskey offered cooking safety tips that everyone can follow to keep their kitchens fire-safe this year:

- Check to make sure your oven is empty before turning it on.
 - 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 2020

Firefighters responded to 145 fires across the Commonwealth last Thanksgiving, including one in a New Bedford apartment building that spread to nearby structures. The fire started with an attempt to cook a turkey in a gas-powered deep fryer. One occupant was severely injured and nearly 30 people were displaced. The combined estimated damages incurred totaled \$1 million.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) strongly discourages 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.

The NFPA 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.” This risk of an oil spill or the ignition of spilled oil is quite high. 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, unless it is used for several hours consecutively like 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.

Home Heating: #2 Cause of Fires on Thanksgiving

Heating is the second leading cause of fires on Thanksgiving. 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" around all heat sources.

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