

Kitchen Fire Prevention

Each year kitchen fires kill hundreds of people and injure thousands. Most of these fires can be prevented by following basic fire safety tips.

- Never leave food cooking on your stove or in your oven when you leave home. Stay in the kitchen whenever anything is cooking. If you do have to leave the kitchen, take something with you, such as a spoon or spatula, to remind yourself to return to the kitchen. Turn off stoves and appliances as soon as you are finished using them. Unplug electrical appliances when they are not in use.
- Wipe appliance surfaces after spills and clean stove tops and ovens regularly. Built-up grease catches fire easily.
- Do not cook if you have been drinking alcohol or if you are drowsy. Studies show that 42 percent of people who have died in cooking fires were asleep.
- Do not wear loose clothing while cooking. Loose sleeves can dangle too close to hot stove burners and catch fire. Protect yourself by wearing sleeves that fit snugly or by rolling up your sleeves securely when you cook.
- Do not store things on or above your stove. Clothing can catch fire when you lean over stove burners to reach shelves.
- Keep potholders, dish towels, and curtains at least 3 feet from your stove. They can catch fire easily.
- Avoid overloading your electrical outlets. Do not plug too many kitchen appliances, especially heat-producing ones such as toasters, coffee pots, waffle irons, and electric frying pans, into the same electrical outlet. Appliances can overheat and cause a fire.
- Keep heat-producing appliances away from walls or curtains. Replace frayed or cracked electrical cords immediately. Never use an appliance cord with a cracked, loose, or damaged plug.
- Keep your home's fuses or circuit breakers in good working order. If an electrical appliance gets wet inside, have it serviced before using it again.
- Use potholders when removing food from a microwave oven. While microwave ovens stay cool,

the food cooked in them can be very hot. Remove lids from packaged microwave foods carefully to prevent steam burns, and test food temperature before eating.

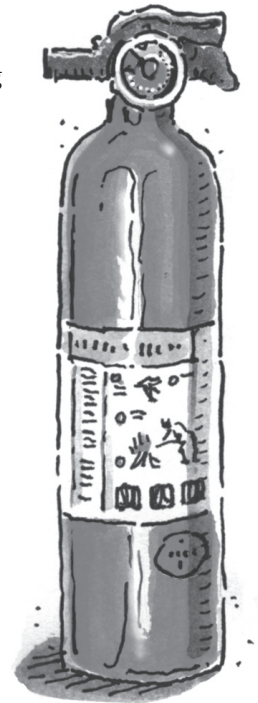
- Prevent burns and stovetop fires by always turning pot handles toward the back of the stove. A pot handle sticking over the edge of your stove can be bumped or grabbed by a child. Always keep children at least 3 feet away from the stove.
- Heat cooking oil slowly over moderate heat. Never leave hot oil unattended.

What should I do if a fire happens?

- Never pour water on a cooking fire. If a pan of food catches fire, carefully slide a lid over the pan and turn off the stove burner. Keep the lid on the pan until it is completely cool. If a fire starts in your oven, close the oven door and turn off the heat source. If the flames do not go out immediately, call the fire department.
- Keep the door closed if anything catches fire in your microwave oven. Turn off or unplug the microwave. Opening the door will only feed oxygen to the fire. Do not use the oven again until it is serviced.
- Keep a portable fire extinguisher handy to fight small, contained fires.

To put out a fire:

- Keep baking soda handy near an electric stove. If a fire should start, dump baking soda on the flames. It is also a good idea to keep a small fire extinguisher handy in your kitchen. Purchase one that will put out all types of fires.



To use a fire extinguisher:

When fighting small fires, remember PASS – pull, aim, squeeze, sweep.

- **Pull** the pin. This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher.
- **Aim** low. Point the extinguisher nozzle or hose at the base of the fire and not at the flames.
- **Squeeze** the lever above the handle. This discharges the extinguishing agent. Release the lever to stop the discharge.
- **Sweep** from side to side, moving carefully toward the fire. Keep the extinguisher aimed at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth until the flames are out. Watch the fire area. If the fire starts again, repeat the process.



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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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