STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY
John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner

Division of Fire Safety
Office of the State Fire Marshal
J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal

Office: 110 Smokey Bear Blvd., Concord, NH
Mailing Address: 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03305
PHONE 603-223-4289, FAX 603-223-4294 or 603-223-4295
TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964 ARSON HOTLINE 1-800-400-3526

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Contact: Sheryl Nielsen, Public Education Specialist
J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal

Keep Your Thanksgiving From Going Up in Flames!

CONCORD – For most of us, the holiday season represents a time for family festivities and good cheer. What few of us consider is that the holiday season is a time when there is an increased risk of home fires.

According to State Fire Marshal, J. William Degnan, many households engage in holiday activities that serve as some of the leading causes of U.S. home fires, including cooking, frying, and candle usage. Add to that the hectic nature of the holidays, when people are trying to accomplish multiple tasks at one time, and the chance for home fires grows even further.

"As everyone gets busier during the holidays, we often become rushed, distracted or tired," says Marshal Degnan. "That's when home fires are more likely to occur. By taking some preventative steps and following simple rules of thumb, most home fires can be prevented."

1. With unattended cooking as the leading cause of U.S. home fires and home fire injuries, it's important to stay in the kitchen while you're frying, grilling or broiling food.
2. Most cooking fires involve the stovetop, so keep anything that can catch fire away from it, and turn off the stove when you leave the kitchen, even if it is for a short period of time.
3. If you're simmering, boiling, baking or roasting food, check it regularly and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
4. Marshal Degnan also suggests creating a "kid-free and pet-free zone" of at least three feet around the stove and areas where hot food and drinks are prepared or carried.
5. If a fire does occur, immediately turn off the heat and cover the pan with a tight fitting lid. Leave the lid on until the pan has become cool to the touch.

Fryers are another common cause of U.S. home fires and home fire injuries.

1. It is important to operate the fryer in an area that is fire safe such as the driveway or other non-combustible surface.
2. When filling the fryer with oil, do not fill it to the top, instead leave enough space so that the displaced oil will remain in the fryer once the food has been added.
3. To avoid the splattering of hot oil be sure that the food to be fried is completely thawed and dry before placing it into the fryer.
4. **NEVER PUT WATER ON A GREASE OR OIL FIRE.** Adding water will cause the hot oil to splatter and spread onto items and people in the area.

Candles are widely used in homes throughout the holidays, and National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) statistics show almost half of all home decoration fires are started by candles. Marshal Degnan

encourages everyone to consider using flameless candles, which look and smell like real candles. However, if you do use traditional candles;

1. Keep them at least 12” away from anything that can burn, and remember to blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed.
2. Use candle holders that are sturdy, won’t tip over and are placed on uncluttered surfaces.
3. Avoid using candles in the bedroom where one-third of U.S. candle fires begin or other areas where people may fall asleep.
4. Lastly, never leave a child alone in a room with a burning candle.

Visit www.usfa.fema.gov and www.nfpa.org/holiday for more information and safety tips.