

Cooking Fires

How to prevent cooking fires, and what to do if one starts.

Pay attention to your cooking. Don't overheat grease. Watch for grease overflows that can start fires. If you have to leave the stove to answer the phone or doorbell, turn down the heat. If you'll be gone more than a few minutes, turn it off.

If your children help you cook, make them aware of cooking hazards. Turn skillet and hot handles toward the center of the stove to prevent accidental overturning.

Don't leave towels or napkins on or near the stove. Don't wear frilly garments--especially those with loose, floppy sleeves -- while cooking.

Keep a Class ABC fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen. (An ABC rating indicates the fire extinguisher can be used on fire involving grease, paper towels, electrical appliances, and other materials commonly found in the kitchen.)

If the grease fire is small, you may be able to stop it with a handful of baking soda (bicarbonate of soda). But don't use baking powder, which contains flour or starch and could spread the fire. And never use water on a grease fire; it also increases the chance of this type of fire getting out of hand.

Always have the pot lid handy to smother a small grease fire.

Don't try to move or carry a pan in which there is a grease fire. Even though moving the pan is a common reaction when a grease fire is discovered, it often results in burns to the carrier and additional fire damage.

If a fire is a big one, don't try to fight it -- call the fire department.

Cooking . . . especially when it involves grease . . . is one of the leading causes of fire in the home. And while kitchen fires seldom

kill people, they injure thousands and cause property damage in the hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

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