

## Holiday Kitchen Safety

**The kitchen is the place to be** during the holidays. Everyone congregates here, or nearby, to join in the activities of preparing meals or to follow fascinating conversations with loved ones.

Unfortunately, the kitchen can also be a dangerous place. U.S. fire departments respond to an average of 162,400 home fires per year involving cooking equipment.

According to the National Fire Prevention Association, Thanksgiving Day in 2013 (November 28) was the leading date for home cooking fires that year with 1,550—230 percent above the average number of fires per day. Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, followed by Christmas Day and Christmas Eve.

Unattended cooking is a contributing factor in 34 percent of fires related to cooking equipment and is responsible for 46 percent of the associated deaths and 46 percent of the associated injuries. It's important that you never leave the kitchen while frying, grilling or broiling food. If you must step away, ask one of your guests to keep an eye on things until you return.

Children under 5 are more likely to be hurt by touching hot cooking equipment or scalded by hot liquids than by

actual fire. For children who love to help in the kitchen, preparing the meal alongside the adults can be fun, but it's important they remain safe.

Use the following age-appropriate guidelines to help prevent injuries of your kitchen helpers this holiday season.

### Ages 3-5 can safely:

- ▶ Get ingredients out of the refrigerator
- ▶ Measure and mix ingredients together in a bowl
- ▶ Pour liquids (preferably cooled) into a bowl
- ▶ Wash fruits and vegetables off under cold water
- ▶ Use a cookie cutter to cut shapes out of cookie dough or sandwiches
- ▶ Lick the cake batter off of a spoon (yum!)

### Ages 6-8 can safely:

- ▶ Open packages
- ▶ Use a butter knife to spread frosting, cream cheese, peanut butter or soft cheese
- ▶ Peel vegetables
- ▶ Measure ingredients
- ▶ Stir ingredients in a bowl
- ▶ Set the table

### Ages 9-12 can safely:

- ▶ Begin to follow a recipe
- ▶ Open cans
- ▶ Use electrical kitchen appliances, such as a microwave oven, when a grown-up is present
- ▶ Use a grater to shred cheese and vegetables
- ▶ Turn stove burners on and off and select oven temperature when an adult is present
- ▶ Help plan the meal
- ▶ Make a salad

### Ages 14+ can safely:

- ▶ Operate the stove or oven without an adult present
- ▶ Heat food in the microwave without supervision
- ▶ Drain cooked pasta into a colander
- ▶ Take a tray of food out of the oven

Source: NFPA's Fire Analysis & Research Division

