Don't Get Caught in a Kitchen Fire

Kitchen fires are the top cause of home fires and fire injuries. Older adults are particularly at risk of dying in a home fire started in the kitchen. Everyone needs to be vigilant when cooking and following these safety tips:

- Do not cook when drowsy. Drowsiness can affect reaction time and decision-making and often results from taking medication of drinking alcohol.
- Do not leave the kitchen when cooking, especially when frying, broiling or grilling. If your loved one needs to dash out of the room for a moment, it is a good practice to have them turn off the stove.
- While cooking, check the progress of a dish regularly, and use a timer to signal the appropriate cooking time. Always use timers to signal that a dish needs to be tended to or that it has finished cooking.
- Make sure all pot and pan handles are turned to the side so they are not accidently bumped, which could result in scalding and burns.
- Avoid loose fitting clothing such as bathrobes and nightgowns. It is best to cook in close-fitting clothes so they don't get caught or burned.
- Always double-check that all appliances are turned off. Have your loved one go through the kitchen after a cooking project to make sure everything has been turned off.

Cooking can be a great hobby for anyone. It is a creative activity and offers an opportunity to make family favorites and share them. Help your loved one create and maintain safe cooking habits.

9-volt Battery Safety

9-volt batteries power our smoke alarms, household items and toys. They can be found in most homes. But these batteries can be a fire hazard if not stored safely or disposed of with care. The problem is the positive and negative posts are close together. If a metal object touches the two posts of a 9-volt battery, it can cause a short circuit. This may make enough heat to start a fire.

It is unsafe to store 9-volt batteries in a drawer near paper clips, coins, pens or other batteries. Do not store common household items such as steel wool, aluminum foil, and keys near 9-volt batteries. If these items touch the two posts, there is a risk of a fire starting. Even weak batteries may have enough charge to cause a fire. Some fires have started in trash when 9-volt batteries where thrown away with other metal items.

Storing 9-volt Batteries:
> Keep batteries in original packaging until you are ready to use them. If loose, keep the posts covered with masking, duct, or electrical tape. Prevent the posts from coming in contact with metal objects.
> Keep the batteries some place where they won't be tossed around.
> Store batteries standing up if possible.
> Do not store batteries loose in a container with other batteries unless both terminals on each battery are covered.

Disposal of 9-volt Batteries:
> Cover the positive and negative posts with masking, duct, or electrical tape before disposing of the battery
> Do not discard in or around metal items or other batteries.

Visit our website at www.RFDGOV.com for more safety tips.

Sky Laterns Are a Safety Concern

Sky lanterns have become increasingly popular as a way to celebrate an occasion. Unfortunately they are a serious fire safety concern. While the National Fire Protection Association discourages the use of sky lanterns, the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code goes one step further and does not allow the use of the devices. The reasons are many:
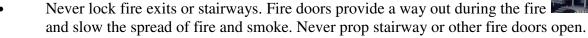
> Some lanterns are made of oiled rice paper with a bamboo frame, materials that can easily catch fire.
> A candle or wax fuel cell is used with the device.
> The lit flame heats the inside of the lantern, causing it to rise into the air.
> Once lit and airborne it can travel over a mile and the user has no control over where the lantern will go.
> Wind can affect the sky lanterns, blowing the sides, forcing the hot air out and sending the flaming lantern back to the ground.
> A destructive fire can result when a flaming lantern reaches the ground.
> These lanterns have the potential to cause grass, brush, vehicle or structural fires.
> The user is liable for any damages and can be issued a summons by the Fire Marshal for violating the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

Unattended cooking is by far the leading contributing factor in most residential fires.
Practice Fire Safety—*Watch What You Heat*!!!

Multi-Dwelling Structures

If you live in an apartment or townhouse community, especially developments that are considered high-rise structures, consider the following fire safety tips:
Be Prepared for the Unthinkable

- Never lock fire exits or stairways. Fire doors provide a way out during the fire and slow the spread of fire and smoke. Never prop stairway or other fire doors open.
- Learn your building evacuation plan and practice your escape.
- Learn the sound of your building's fire alarm and respond immediately to it.

Personal Responsibility

- If you smell smoke or see a fire, do not assume anyone else has already called the fire department.
- Immediately call 9-1-1 as early notification is vitally important.

Getting Out

- Before you try to leave your apartment, feel the door with the back of your hand. If the door feels warm to the touch, do not attempt to open it. Stay in your apartment.
- Stuff the cracks around the door with towels, rags, bedding or tape and cover vents to keep smoke out.
- Call the fire department to tell them exactly where you are located. Do this even if you can see fire apparatus on the street below.
- Wait at a window and signal for help with a flashlight or by waving a sheet.
- If possible, open the window at the top and bottom, but do not break it, you may need to close the window if smoke rushes in.
- Be patient and don't panic. Rescuing all the occupants of a high-rise building can take time.

Do you have a working smoke alarm? The Richmond Metro Fire Departments offer free smoke alarms, batteries and installation. All you have to do is call the *Metro Richmond Fire Safety Hotline* toll-free at 1-888-537-5967 to schedule a visit from your firefighters. If you are renting, the owner by code is required to supply working smoke alarms. We will be glad to assist you with the owner.