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MEDIA ALERT

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Following These Tips for Turkey Will Make Your Thanksgiving Dinner Safer

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA: From stuffing to brining to leftovers, everyone has a favorite Thanksgiving turkey menu. As you plan your holiday meal, follow these turkey tips from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. They will help you keep your Thanksgiving dinner delicious and safe.

Cooking is the biggest cause of home fires and fire injuries, and Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires. So there's no better time to focus on safety.

A snapshot of fires in Virginia in 2015 reveals there were **2,805** cooking fires, or an average of **8** cooking fires per day. On Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 2015 there were **22** cooking fires. The day before Thanksgiving there were **17** cooking fires. The day after Thanksgiving there were **5** cooking fires.

"No matter how many years you've been cooking, or how many Thanksgiving feasts you've served, you still need to make safety your main ingredient," says Virginia State Fire Marshal Brian McGraw. Start with these prevention tips:

- Make your cooking area safe. Move things that can burn away from the stove. Turn pot handles toward the back so that they can't be bumped.
- Watch what you're cooking. Use a timer when roasting a turkey or baking pies.
- Be prepared. Keep a large pan lid or baking sheet handy in case you need to smother a pan fire.
- Stay awake and alert while you're cooking. If you see smoke or the grease starts to boil in your pan, turn the burner off.
- Prevent burns. Wear short sleeves when you cook, or roll them up. Don't lean over the burner. Use potholders and oven mitts to handle hot cookware.

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A Note About Frying Turkeys

Deep-frying turkeys has become popular in recent years. This cooking method has a lot of risks. Turkey fryers get hot all over, so they need to be handled with great care and only by an adult. They can tip over, spilling hot cooking oil. Partially frozen turkeys placed into hot fryers will cause the oil to splatter. If fryers are overfilled, the hot oil will spill over the side when the turkey is added. Even a small amount of oil on a hot burner can start a fire.

If you deep-fry a turkey, place the fryer outside on a flat surface that can't burn, such as cement. Place the fryer at least 10 feet from anything that can catch fire. Don't let children or pets come anywhere near it. An adult should watch the fryer while it cooks. Use a fryer with thermostat controls. Without these controls, the oil can heat to the point of catching fire. Thaw the turkey completely before cooking it so that ice crystals won't splatter the hot oil. Use potholders and oven mitts when handling the turkey.

There's nothing more satisfying than cooking a good meal for the people we love. Make safety a priority in your kitchen at Thanksgiving and all year long.

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