

Bluff Park Neighborhood Association



Thanksgiving Safety Tips

From your VP of Public Safety: Jonathan Glover

Hello Neighbors. I wanted to add few safety tips for the Thanksgiving holiday season. These are from the FEMA website. <http://www.fema.gov> FEMA actually refers to another great resource: The US Fire Administration <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/cooking.html>

I've had some fire training and you would be surprised how fast a small "nothing" can get out of control. My apologies for the length of the email, but I really love Thanksgiving.

Statistically, cooking is the primary reason for home fires. Following that reasoning, Thanksgiving is the **peak** day of the year for home fires. Chances are low that you will have a problem, but it never hurts to be mindful of the potential for an emergency.

Keep your holiday safe and fun. Follow these tips from the USFA:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen, turn off the burner.
- Watch what you are cooking. Fires start when the heat is too high. If you see any smoke or the grease starts to boil, turn the burner off.
- If you simmer, bake, or roast food, check it regularly and use a timer to remind you.
- Keep anything that can catch fire (oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packages, towels, and curtains) away from your stovetop.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. Then, no one can bump them or pull them over.
- Keep a pan lid or baking sheet nearby. Use it to cover the pan if it catches fire. This will put the fire out.
- In the event of an oven fire, turn off the oven and keep the door closed until it is cool.
- Keep children away from the stove. The stove will be hot, and kids should stay three feet away.
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.

At this point, I want to add my \$.02. Have a good fire extinguisher at the ready. I keep one in my car, in several parts of my house and a couple in the garage. I've put out fires the hard way and the easy way in training. When I was a kid I tried to use water on a small oil fire and it went very wrong. I used that mistake to learn a lot about how fire works and how to stop it. Nothing is easier than using the right tool for a task. The right fire extinguisher is like magic vs using whatever is lying around.

Well over a decade ago, I decided to try frying a turkey. The whole oven thing seemed kind of boring and I had a number of friends and acquaintances that really liked the fried turkey experience. I tend to be attracted to unique and complicated processes that have a good payoff. So, I talked my wife into letting me fry the turkey for the family dinner (Pro Tip: Always marry "Up"). I researched the heck out of frying a turkey online. I thought I was ready to go. Part of the issue with training people is that you don't always know how to cover all of the details for those who "don't know". Not every rock star operator knows how to teach. Teaching is hard. Maybe good teachers are born, but the great thing is that: If you pay attention, you can learn.

Here are the FEMA guidelines for Turkey Frying:

- Turkey fryers can easily tip over spilling hot oil across a large area. Use your turkey fryer only outdoors on a sturdy, level surface well away from things that can burn. Make sure to have a "3-foot kid- and pet-free zone" around your turkey fryer to protect against burn injuries.
- An overfilled cooking pot will cause oil to spill over when the turkey is placed inside. Determine the correct amount of oil needed by first placing the turkey in the pot with water.
- A partially frozen turkey will cause hot oil to splatter. Make sure your turkey is completely thawed before you fry it.
- Turkey fryers can easily overheat and start a fire. Check the temperature often with a cooking thermometer so the oil won't overheat.
- The pot, lid and handles of a turkey fryer can get dangerously hot and cause burn injuries. Use long cooking gloves that protect hands and arms when you handle these items.

OK. Here are my additions:

1. Use an electronic thermometer. They are much faster at giving you a reading. You will take the turkey out of the oil a number of times and the longer you leave it out, the longer it has to reheat.
2. Pay attention to the last part of the FEMA instructions: "Use long cooking gloves (barbecue mitt) that protect hands and arms when you handle these items." I also think that throwing on a long sleeve, wool shirt is a good idea. If hot oil splashes on you, having fabric that keeps the oil away from your skin is a good thing. I like to go with the tried and true Pendleton which has served me well for a decade.
3. When you lower the turkey into the fryer: TAKE YOUR TIME. Be very slow and intentional. This will keep the oil in the fryer instead of on the ground. I usually put cardboard down to cover oil spills. I barely get any oil on the cardboard at this point. You can't go too slow. Especially with a good barbecue mitt.
4. Have a good pan with a rack available to place the turkey when done. 151 degrees is the mark to shoot for.
5. Let the turkey sit for 10 minutes before carving. It will finish the cooking and get you ready for carving.

If you are confused, feel free to reach out to me at Safer@BPSafety.org