

Cooking causes most U.S. home fires; Red Cross issues 10 steps to help keep the chef safe

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The American Red Cross Cascades Region reminds everyone that cooking is the leading cause of home fires and issues safety steps to follow to help avoid one of these blazes.

“The top reason for cooking fires is someone leaving the stove unattended while cooking,” said Dawn Johnson, Regional Communications Manager, Red Cross Cascades. “Cooking brings family and friends together, but this normal, everyday activity can also lead to disaster. In fact, cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. To help keep your loved ones safe, it’s important to stay in the kitchen while you’re cooking.”

Follow these 10 steps to help stay safe while cooking:

If you are frying, grilling or broiling food, never leave it unattended — stay in the kitchen. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

Don’t wear loose clothing or sleeves that dangle while cooking.

If you’re simmering, baking, roasting or broiling food, check it regularly.

Use a timer to remind yourself that the stove or oven is on.

Keep kids and pets away from the cooking area. Make them stay at least three feet away from the stove.

Keep anything that can catch fire — potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stove, oven or any other appliance in the kitchen that generates heat.

Clean cooking surfaces on a regular basis to prevent grease buildup.

Consider purchasing a fire extinguisher to keep in your kitchen. Contact your local fire department to take training on the proper use of extinguishers.

Always check the kitchen before going to bed or leaving the home to make sure all stoves, ovens and small appliances are turned off.

Install a smoke alarm near your kitchen, on each level of your home, near sleeping areas and inside and outside bedrooms if you sleep with doors closed. Use the test button to check it each month. Replace all batteries at least once a year if your smoke alarm requires it.

If you cannot afford to purchase smoke alarms or are physically unable to install one, the Red Cross may be able to help. Contact your local Red Cross for more information.

Download the Red Cross First Aid app for quick, expert advice on what to do in case of an emergency. Find all of the Red Cross apps in smartphone app stores by searching for the American Red Cross or going to redcross.org/apps.