



Office of the Maine State Fire Marshal
52 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04330
(207) 626-3870

Tips for Elders on How to Cook Safely



Cooking activities are often the cause of fires, and elderly people are frequently injured or killed as a result of these fires because they could have physical or mental issues, medications may slow their response to a fire, or they could be cooking alone. The following tips can help elderly people reduce the risk of a cooking fire:

- ✓ Never leave food cooking without staying near it. Deep fat frying is a very dangerous type of cooking, due to the danger of hot fat landing on a person or becoming too hot to safely handle. If an elderly person has Alzheimer's or is often forgetful in general, there are devices that can be fitted to a stove that will sound an alarm if the stove stays on without being noticed.
- ✓ Keep handles turned away from the floor, but not over adjacent burners on the stovetop, so they won't be accidentally hit or get too hot. Use pots and pans that can be easily handled by an elderly person, such as: two-handled pots, pots and pans that aren't too big or heavy for the user; and items that have insulated handles.
- ✓ Don't wear clothes with loose-fitting sleeves or styles that may drag or drape onto the cooking surface. Many materials can catch fire when they touch a hot burner or pot. Wear items that have snug-fitting or short sleeves, or roll long sleeves up tightly before cooking.
- ✓ Keep the area around cooking stoves clear of items that could catch fire if they fell onto the hot cooking surface or were splattered by hot oil. These items may include: potholders, paper plates, dish towels, paper towels or cans of cooking spray. Keep the stovetop and floor around the stove clean (wipe up spills and grease) and use nonslip rugs in front of the stove.
- ✓ Have proper safety equipment nearby and in working order. Keep a working dry-chemical fire extinguisher in the kitchen: lids for pots or pans may also be used to smother fires that are confined to a container. Have a box of baking soda nearby to use on a grease fire. Make sure a working smoke detector is located near the kitchen, but at least 10 feet from the stove. Test the detector regularly.