



# OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

JB Pritzker, Governor  
Michele L. Pankow, State Fire Marshal

For Immediate Release  
Date: November 18, 2025

Contact: JC Fultz  
217-685-2041  
jc.fultz@illinois.gov

## Thanksgiving Safety Starts in the Kitchen: Expert Tips to Keep Families Protected

*An estimated 1,446 home cooking fires were reported to U.S. fire departments on Thanksgiving Day in 2023, reflecting a 388 percent increase over the daily average.*

Springfield, Ill- Thanksgiving is the leading day for home fires involving cooking equipment, with four times the average number occurring. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an estimated 1,446 home cooking fires were reported to U.S. fire departments on Thanksgiving Day in 2023, reflecting a 388 percent increase over the daily average. On annual average between 2019 and 2023, cooking accounted for the majority of U.S. home fires on Thanksgiving Day (80 percent) and 40 percent of the civilian injuries. Overall, cooking causes over half (52%) of all reported home fires and nearly two of every five (36%) home fire injuries, and it is a leading cause of home fire deaths (17%). Ranges and cook-tops account for almost three out of every five home fires reported involving cooking, with ovens accounting for 13% of those fires.

“Kitchens are especially busy during the holidays, and that rush can lead to distractions and distractions can lead to accidental fires. Set timers, stay focused, or assign specific roles in the kitchen to help ensure your Thanksgiving meal comes together safely and without incident,” **says Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow**. “Remember, staying alert and keeping a close eye on what’s on the stove or in the oven is the simplest way to prevent a cooking fire.”

“Turkey fryers are one of the biggest holiday fire hazards we see each year. Hot oil, unstable equipment, and outdoor distractions can create dangerous conditions in seconds,” **said Chicago Deputy Fire Commissioner Brandon Keller**. “If you choose to fry a turkey this year do so outside away from anything that can burn, keep it on a flat surface, and make sure your turkey is completely thawed before lowering it into the oil. A few simple precautions can prevent a holiday disaster.”

Nearly 500,000 people seek medical treatment for burn injuries each year in the United States, and an estimated 72 percent of burns occur at home, according to the American Burn Association (ABA). Hot liquids, such as coffee, tea, soup and tap water, can cause serious burn injuries.

“At Camp I Am Me, we meet incredible survivors whose lives were changed in an instant by preventable burn injuries. As we gather with loved ones this Thanksgiving, we want to remind everyone that a few extra minutes of preparation and safety and prevent a lifetime of pain,” **said Camp I Am Me by Illinois Fire Safety Alliance Executive Director Philip Zaleski**. Deep frying a turkey may be festive, but it must be done with extreme care, or better yet, consider safer

cooking alternatives. The best holiday memories are made around the table, not in the emergency room.”

Here are some tips to keep in mind when preparing food, not just during the holiday season but all year.

- Never leave food that you are frying, boiling, grilling or broiling unattended! If you leave the kitchen, even for a short amount of time, turn off the stove.
- Frying a turkey has become more popular in recent years.
  - Make sure to not overfill oil in the fryer. Fill the pot you plan to use to fry the turkey with water and place the turkey in. This will help to determine how much oil is needed without causing oil to spill out when you are ready to fry, which could lead to a fire.
  - Use the turkey fryer outdoors ONLY!
  - Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and dry before frying.
  - Use long cooking gloves that protect hands and arms when you handle the pot!
- Create a “Kid Free Zone” of at least three feet around the stove or anywhere you are preparing hot food or drinks.
- Keep the area around the stove clear of towels, papers, potholders, or anything that can burn.
- Check your oven before preheating to ensure there are no items inside.
- If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you when food is ready.
- If there is a fire in the oven, keep the door shut and turn off the heat.
- Smother small flames in a pan by sliding a lid over the pan. Turn off the burner and leave the lid over the pan while it cools.
- If you have any doubt fighting a small fire, just get out! Call 9-1-1 or your emergency number from outside the home.

Additional Fire Safety information can be found on the [NFPA website](#) or on [the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal website](#).