

## Cooking with Caution

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, a kitchen fire occurred at an Undergraduate Student Residence. The building's fire protection systems functioned effectively controlling the fire and alerting the occupants. The fire was controlled by the building's fire sprinkler system. Two sprinkler heads activated in the unit controlling the fire. The occupants of the building were alerted and the fire department was notified through the activation of the fire alarm system.

Cooking is the leading cause of residential fires and accounts for 46% of all reported home fires. The leading contributing factor for cooking fires is unattended cooking which contributes to nearly half of all cooking fires. On average, US. fire departments respond to 455 kitchen fires per day.

From 2014, there have been eighteen (18) kitchen fires in student housing on campus. The Stanford University Fire Marshal's Office (SUFMO) will be providing public awareness information for all student housing that includes a kitchen or kitchenette.

Since cooking is the the leading cause home fires, it is important for everyone to follow some basic guidelines in preventing cooking fires so that we can protect our Stanford community, in addition to our families and homes.

Cooking guidelines:

- ✓ Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stove or stovetop.
- ✓ Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen, for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- ✓ When cooking remain in the home and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- ✓ Keep anything that can burn, oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains, away from the stovetop.

If you have a small (grease) fire and decide to fight the fire....

- ✓ On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turn off the burner. If able, without spilling or dislodging the lid, slide the pan to another burner position that has not recently been used (it's cool and will cool the pan quicker). Leave the pan covered until the pan has completely cooled.
- ✓ For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed until the oven has cooled.
- ✓ Have a fire extinguisher on hand that is fully charge at all times. For grease fires, use of extinguishers with carbon dioxide extinguishing agent will work best as it leaves no residue. However, this type of extinguisher is not rated for fires involving paper or wood so it should not be relied on for general purpose use. For general purpose, use a dry chemical, "ABC" rated extinguisher.

Be prepared for a fire....

- ✓ Check your smoke detectors to make sure they are working by testing them monthly and replacing their batteries annually.
- ✓ Make a home fire escape plan and establish a meeting place outside.



Take steps now to protect your family, home and our Stanford community from the dangers of cooking fires.



If you have any subject matter related to fire safety that you would like covered in future issues of From the Ground Up, please let me know at [mvonraesfeld@stanford.edu](mailto:mvonraesfeld@stanford.edu)