

# State Fire Marshal Urges Caution When Using Turkey Fryers for Holiday Meals

State Fire Marshal Ronald Farr urges consumers to use extreme caution when preparing their holiday meals with a turkey fryer because of the dangers frequently associated with the devices. Tests have shown that the fryers have a high risk of tipping over, overheating, or spilling hot oil, leading to fires, burns, or other injuries.

The cooking method, which has become increasingly popular in recent years, requires placing the turkey in three gallons or more of oil, heated by propane. Some opt for frying, believing it delivers better taste and cuts down on cooking time; but the units have come under scrutiny as Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., an independent product safety-testing organization, has decided not to certify any turkey fryer with their UL mark.

Some concerns about turkey fryers:

- When the turkey is placed in the hot oil, oil may spill onto the burner, creating a fire.
- The units can easily tip over, spilling hot, scalding oil onto anyone or anything nearby.
- Most units do not have automatic thermostat controls, so oil may heat until it catches fire.
- The sides, lids, and handles get extremely hot and may cause burns.

The Bureau of Fire Services urges consumers to use cooking equipment that has been tested and approved by a recognized testing facility.

"Unattended cooking is the primary cause of residential fires," said Farr. "By simply oven-roasting a turkey the traditional way, or ordering a fried turkey from a grocery store or caterer, who are experienced in deep frying food and use professional-grade frying equipment, consumers can reduce the chance for serious burns and injuries."

However, if a turkey fryer is used, here are some tips for safer use:

- Turkey fryers should always be used outdoors a safe distance from buildings and any other material that can burn.
- Never use turkey fryers on wooden decks or in garages.
- Make sure the fryers are used on a flat surface to reduce accidental tipping.

- Never leave the fryer unattended. Most units do not have thermostat controls causing the oil to continue to heat until it catches fire.
  - Never let children or pets near the fryer when in use. Even after use, never allow children or pets near the turkey fryer. The oil inside the cooking pot can remain dangerously hot, hours after use.
  - To avoid oil spillover, do not overfill the fryer. It is recommended that you follow the manufacturer's use guide.
- 
- Use well-insulated potholders or oven mitts when touching pot or lid handles. If possible, wear safety goggles to protect eyes from oil splatter.
  - Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and be careful with marinades. Oil and water do not mix, and water causes oil to spill over, causing a fire or even an explosion hazard.
  - The National Turkey Federation recommends refrigerator thawing and to allow approximately 24 hours for every five pounds of bird thawed in the refrigerator. Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby and use it if the fire is manageable. Never use water to extinguish a grease fire. If the fire increases, immediately call 9-1-1 for help.
- If you have any questions regarding this bulletin, please contact the Bureau of Fire Services at (517) 241-8847.

Reprinted from the November 2010 Fire Service Connection