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Department
of Insurance

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NEWS RELEASE

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Make Fire Safety the Centerpiece of Thanksgiving Festivities

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) — A golden-brown turkey with delicious sides may set the stage for the perfect Thanksgiving feast, but state officials are urging Ohioans to make fire safety the real centerpiece of holiday festivities by staying alert and practicing patience in the kitchen.

“More cooking fires occur on Thanksgiving than any other day of the year, and it’s not hard to see why,” said State Fire Marshal Kevin S. Reardon. “Between cleaning, taking care of children and cooking multiple dishes at a time, there’s no shortage of distractions in and around the kitchen. Staying alert and paying attention to what you’re cooking can go a long way in ensuring those distractions don’t have tragic consequences.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association, U.S. fire departments responded to 1,630 cooking-related residential fires on Thanksgiving Day in 2018 — more than three times an average day. In Ohio, cooking-related home fires throughout the month of November have been on a slight decline in recent years — going from 380 in 2017 down to 335 last year.

There were 22 reported house fires, with no fatalities, on Thanksgiving last year — down from a total of 47 in 2018.

“That’s the type of trend we really want to see continue in Ohio,” said Marshal Reardon. “Many wonderful holiday celebrations this time of year can be ruined by fires that are most often preventable, so it’s important to remain vigilant and stay safe in the kitchen.”

“Homeowners insurance generally covers cooking fire damage, but consumers should review their insurance with an agent to make sure it’s adequate,” said Ohio Department of Insurance Interim Director Tynesia Dorsey.

“Nobody wants to spend Thanksgiving injured in the emergency room or having to request assistance from the fire department,” said Dorsey. “Planning ahead for a busy day and staying aware in the kitchen can decrease the risk of injury and property damage that could lead to an insurance claim.”

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There are steps you can take to stay safe:

- Do not leave any cooking area unattended.
- Set a timer as a reminder of the food you are preparing.
- Maintain a “kid-free zone” of 3 feet around the stove or areas where hot food or drinks are being prepared.
- Keep paper towels and napkins away from hot surfaces.
- Keep deep-fried turkey cooking out of the garage, away from your home, and wooden structures.
- Before frying a turkey, place it in the fryer and cover it with water to determine the exact amount of oil you will need to prevent a fire caused by overflow.
- Have an appropriate fire extinguisher handy.
- If the situation becomes more serious, evacuate and call 911.

If you have to file a claim, take photographs and/or video of the damage and immediately contact your insurance agent and/or company. Provide complete and accurate information when submitting a claim to avoid delay.

You can call the Ohio Department of Insurance at 1-800-686-1526 or visit www.insurance.ohio.gov for more information. Additional cooking safety tips are available from the State Fire Marshal's Office at www.com.ohio.gov/documents/fire_cookingsafetytips.pdf.

Additionally, the Ohio Department of Health has issued guidance for celebrating the holidays this year, complete with practical suggestions to stay safe and healthy amid the recent rise in COVID-19 cases. That guidance document can be found [here](#).

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*The **Division of State Fire Marshal** is part of the Ohio Department of Commerce. The department is Ohio's chief regulatory agency, focused on promoting prosperity and protecting what matters most to Ohioans. We ensure businesses follow the laws that help them create jobs and keep Ohioans safe. To learn more about what we do, visit our website at com.ohio.gov.*

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