

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Fire safety for winter warmth cooking

Tuesday, 1 June 2010

With winter officially starting today, the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) is urging people to be **home fire safe** in the kitchen.

MFS Community Safety District Officer, Allan Foster says winter is a time when people like to cook hot breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

“Colder weather generally leads to greater use of ovens and stove-tops. This brings with it an increased risk of burn injuries and house fires.

“Unfortunately, we see many fires caused by cooking left unattended. Also, once a fire has started, many people are unsure of how to safely extinguish it,” Mr Foster says.

“Too often we see people being injured or unwittingly increasing a fire’s spread by putting water on an oil (or fat) fire. Water should **never** be used on an oil (or fat) fire.”

Last winter, the MFS responded to several cooking fires. In some cases, fires left people with burn injuries, and in other cases, left people feeling lucky to be alive.

Mr Foster says people can enjoy cooking winter warmth foods by following these tips:

- **Never leave cooking unattended.**
- **Use extra caution when cooking with oils.** Heat cooking oils slowly.
- **Never throw water onto an oil or fat fire.** Use a fire blanket, cooking utensil lid or a Dry Chemical Powder fire extinguisher.
- **Never try to move a pan that has caught on fire.** This may result in spillage, injury and the spreading of fire.
- **If a fire occurs in the oven, turn the oven off and leave the door closed** to smother the fire. If the fire does not go out, evacuate your home before calling triple zero for help.
- **Turn pot/pan handles inward** so they cannot be knocked over and are out of the reach of children. (**Note:** Not over another element that is turned on.)
- Lids of pots and pans (when the pot/pan is in use but the lid is not) should be readily available on the bench top. The use of oven mittens and a lid is an effective method of smothering a small pot or pan fire. If the fire does not go out immediately, evacuate your home before calling triple zero for help.
- Remove all grease and oil from cooking surfaces before you cook.
- Keep combustible materials away from the cooking area.
- Wear clothes with short or tight-fitting sleeves. Loose garments can easily catch fire.

The MFS urges householders to buy an approved fire blanket and a portable fire extinguisher to keep them safe in the kitchen. A Dry Chemical Powder fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 5B(E) is recommended.

District Officer Foster says, “Even if you have a small fire on the stove and believe you’ve completely extinguished it, you should still call triple zero for fire response. Firefighters will ensure the fire hasn’t spread to the roof space above flues and fans, and will not charge for attendance.

“In addition, familiarise yourself with the fire blanket or extinguisher instructions now, so you know what to do if a fire starts,” Mr Foster says.

The fire services urge householders to combine the above safety tips with reliable, working smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old and a Home Fire Escape Plan.

For media enquiries please telephone the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770

Further information for the public:

Call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.
Country callers 1300 737 637.

www.mfs.sa.gov.au