

Final Version
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ECHO Questions and Answers

20 Minute Conversation “Prevention of Kitchen Fires”

Preface: Last year in Minnesota more than 2,500 house fires started in the kitchen. These fires injured at least 35 people and caused about \$2 million in damage.

1. Why do so many fires start in the kitchen?

Sample Answer:

- That’s where people cook, using heat and fire
 - It’s the place where heat sources and flammable materials come together
- In addition to stove and oven, people use other appliances that make heat
 - Microwaves, coffee makers, toasters, electric fry pans, rice cookers etc.
- When people are very busy at home, their attention may be divided
 - That’s when mistakes happen

2. Why don’t people pay attention?

Sample Answer:

- People leave the room, but don’t turn off the stove
 - Some people even leave the house with the stove on!
- Some people drink alcohol
- Some people cook when they are too sleepy
- Some people cook when taking medicine that makes them drowsy
- People have the TV on in the kitchen
- People play with their kids
- They are on the phone, texting or on the computer

3. What are the ways to prevent kitchen fires?

Sample Answer:

- Pay attention to your cooking!
 - Not paying attention is the biggest single cause of kitchen fires
- Keep flammable items away from burners on stove
 - If stove is near window, curtains can blow across stove
 - Loose fabric on your sleeves can hang down onto burners
 - Wear tight sleeves, short sleeves or roll them up.
 - Dish towels on counter near stove can get bumped onto burners
 - Cans of household cleaners near stove can explode
 - Especially aerosol cleaners or pressurized cans

4. What about other kitchen appliances that can cause fire?

Sample Answer:

- Don't use oven as a storage area
 - Things might catch on fire if you forget and turn on oven
- For other appliances – unplug them when not in use
 - Don't put metal objects in a microwave
- Don't use too many extension cords and overload the electric circuits
- Old grease or food droppings can catch on fire
 - Clean the stove and oven so grease and old food don't build up
 - Clean filters on exhaust fans – especially if you fry foods a lot

5. What precautions should you take if you have children?

Sample answer:

- Don't let small children get near the stove
 - "Three foot rule" –stay three steps from stove
- Turn handles of pots and pans toward back of stove
 - So children can't reach them and pull on them
- Get safety covers for control knobs if they are on front of stove
 - So children and pets don't accidentally turn on stove
- Use the back burners whenever possible – especially when cooking dangerous things like hot grease or oil, or boiling water.

6. But what if the children want to help cook?

Sample Answer:

- Cooking is too dangerous for small children
- Children mature at different ages, but some say wait until they are 12 to cook
- Train older children to cook safely
 - Have them watch this show!
 - Have them take a cooking class
 - Never have a child cook without adult supervision
- Have children do other kitchen tasks that are safer

7. We saw in the video that it is wrong to use water to put out an oil fire. Why is that?

Sample answer:

- Oil and water don't mix, so if you throw on water it explodes and the flames get very big.
- Also – don't try to carry the burning oil outside
 - If you spill the fire goes all over

8. What should I do if I have a fire on my stove?

Sample answer:

- Put the lid on the pan and turn off the stove.
 - Always have your lids nearby
- The safest thing is to call 9-1-1 and get out of the house (or go outside first, then call 9-1-1)
 - Trying to put out the fire may waste time
 - The fire may spread very quickly
 - Smoke is very dangerous – it is poison and can kill you
- Do your best to stay calm
- And remember: DON'T TRY WATER!

9. So I should be afraid of smoke as well as fire?

Sample answer:

- Yes, if your house gets full of smoke, go outside right away!
 - It is poison and can kill you!
- That's why houses must have smoke detectors
 - Check them regularly – at least once a year
 - Make sure their batteries are fresh

10. Can you tell me about carbon monoxide gas?

Sample answer:

- Carbon monoxide – known as CO – is often called the silent killer
- It is invisible – and it does not smell
- CO can be caused by any fuel that doesn't burn thoroughly
 - Charcoal or wood fires
 - Faulty furnace or water heater
 - Cars running in a garage
- Signs of CO poisoning are nausea, drowsiness, headaches and vomiting
- Too much CO can kill you
 - Get to fresh air right away if you feel symptoms

11. If CO is invisible and has no smell, how do I know it is there?

Sample Answer:

- Get a CO detector
 - Use it with a smoke detector – you need both
 - Test it every month
- Smoke and CO detectors are important for safety
- A new state law requires CO detectors to be within 10 feet of sleeping areas
- Smoke detectors are required to be on every floor and inside every bedroom
 - They should be mounted on or near the ceiling

12. What about using fire extinguishers?

Sample Answer:

- Be careful! – it is very difficult to assess when an extinguisher can handle a specific fire.
- Make sure you have the right type of fire extinguisher
 - The wrong kind can make it worse
- Make sure you know how to use it properly
 - When your kitchen is on fire is not a good time to learn – learn ahead of time
- Make sure it has not expired
- Mount the extinguisher near an exit
 - Do not go toward the fire to retrieve the extinguisher
- Never be afraid to call 9-1-1 right away – that is the safest thing

13. [Cultural question] People from some countries may be used to cooking with small wood fires or a charcoal grill inside the house? Is that okay?

Sample Answer:

- No. Use those fires outside only.
 - Minnesota homes are insulated, so the gas stays inside and builds up.
 - Only proper place for an indoor fire is fireplace – but don't cook there!
- These fires produce carbon monoxide – the poison gas you cannot see or smell.
- [Somali] Charcoal fires for fragrances
- [Hmong] Ritual burning of paper
- [Hmong] Cooking with propane
- [Latino] Candles for religious reasons

14. What other planning is needed to be safe in a fire emergency?

Sample Answer:

- Plan your escape route.
 - You need to know how to get out of your house if the kitchen is on fire
- Pick a place to meet with your family in case you get separated

15. A lot of agencies can help you. You can find them listed on our website along with additional information

Sample answer:

- **HOSTS READ:** For more information on how to prevent kitchen fires, visit www.echominnesota.org.

16. Do you have anything else you'd like to add on this subject?

Sample answer:

- Pay attention when you are cooking
- Keep a tight-fitting lid handy whenever you heat oil
- If you have a fire, stay calm
- If you can't put it out easily, get outside and call 9-1-1
- Get smoke and CO detectors

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