



## Cooking Fire Safety

Cooking has long remained the leading cause of fires in and out of the home. As an integral part of our everyday lives, it is easy to overlook the threat of an accidental fire occurring from cooking.

### Best Practices

If you are in an approved location, on or off campus, and will be engaging in cooking, there are a number of practices that should be followed to protect lives and property.

- Stay in the kitchen when you are engaged in any form of cooking. Unattended cooking has historically been a leading contributor to kitchen fires. Use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- Do not cook if you are sleepy, have consumed alcohol, or have taken medicine or drugs that make you drowsy.
- Always keep a lid nearby when cooking on a stove top. If a small fire starts, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the burner. NEVER PUT WATER ON A FIRE INVOLVING GREASE, OILS OR FATS. Leave the pan covered until it has cooled.
- Keep anything that can catch fire at least 3 feet away from the stove-top or other heated surface.
- Wear short or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can hang down onto stove burners and catch fire.
- Maintain all cooking appliances in accordance with the manufacturer's instruction manual and ensure all surfaces are clean and free from excessive grease buildup. Do not use cooking appliances for storage, even if its temporary such as placing a pizza box on a stove.

- Use caution when moving appliances that are connected to a gas line. Be sure not to overextend or damage the gas line and take the opportunity to ensure all connections are secure before pushing the appliance back into its designated place.
- Grills should only be used outside, kept a minimum of 10 feet from any structure and should not be placed on any balcony or under any type of combustible awning/overhang. A fire extinguisher with a minimum of a 2A:10BC rating should be within 30 feet of the grill. When cooking is finished, propane or other approved fuel should be shut off at the source. If charcoal is used, be sure to allow it to cool and then soak it in water prior to disposal in a metal container.

## Prohibited Items

Due to the inherent risks associated with cooking, the following appliances are prohibited if you are living in campus housing:

- Any slow cookers, rice cookers, electric or traditional pressure cookers, hot plates, toasters, toaster ovens, coffee pots, electric kettles and induction cooktops. Additionally, microwaves, refrigerators and Keurig machines are only permitted if they are rated for 700 watts or less.



If you are uncertain about whether an item is prohibited, please contact [Housing Services](#) or the [Environmental Health and Safety Department](#) prior to purchasing. A copy of this policy is available on the [Housing Services website](#).

## Did you know?

Appliances are prohibited from being plugged into a power strip or an extension cord. Any heat producing or high amperage appliance should be plugged directly into a single electrical outlet capable of supplying the needed power. Many people have experienced extensive property damage or suffered fatal injury from engaging in these practices.



## Campus Kitchens

If you work in any of the kitchens throughout campus, be sure to familiarize yourself with the fire extinguishing system installed underneath the cooking hood. If a fire occurs, you must activate this system prior to using a portable fire extinguisher. This can be accomplished by pulling the “manual pull station” such as the one pictured below. The Environmental Health and Safety Department can provide additional training on these systems, the use of portable fire extinguishers and other practices needed to remain safe in our campus kitchens.



## Chafing Dish Safety

The use of chafing dishes is common for many events across campus. Since chafing dishes require the use of open flame chafing fuel cannisters such as Sterno, use the following guidelines to ensure that an uncontrolled fire doesn't occur at your next event:

1. Only use chafing dishes in rooms that are protected by automatic fire sprinklers.
2. Set up buffet lines in rooms with a door that can be closed if a fire occurs (not in a hallway or lobby).
3. Place chafing dishes on a non-combustible surface, and away from other combustible materials. If a tablecloth must be used, it should be fire resistant or covered with a non-combustible mat.
4. Make sure that there is a means to extinguish the cannister flames, as recommended by the manufacturer, such as a "snuffer paddle".

**Safety concern, training request, or other inquiry?**

Reach out to the **Environmental Health and Safety Department** today!

**safety@andrew.cmu.edu**