

PRESS RELEASE

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KEEP LOOKING WHEN COOKING: STAY SAFE IN THE KITCHEN THIS FEBRUARY

With the school holidays about to begin and other events such as Valentine's Day and Shrove Tuesday coming up, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is urging residents to avoid distractions in the kitchen to reduce the risk of an accidental fire breaking out in their home.

Each year, more accidental fires in the home are caused by cooking than anything else. One of the main reasons for such a high number of cooking fires is the amount of potential distractions around the home. This can be something as simple as a knock on the door, a phone call or even a conversation with another member of family, but they can all take your attention away from the hob or oven.

Pete Farmer, Temporary Manager for Prevention, said: "Cooking-related fires tend to result in the most non-fatal casualties as well as the second most fatalities, behind only smoking related fires. With Valentine's Day and Shrove Tuesday fast approaching and people spending more time in the kitchen, it's vital that everyone takes care and keeps looking when cooking."

Here are a few tips to keep you and your loved ones safe when cooking:

- Take care if you need to leave the kitchen whilst cooking. Take pans off the heat or turn them down to avoid risk.
- If a pan catches fire, don't take any risks – Get Out, Stay Out, and Call 999.
- Double check the hob is off when you've finished cooking.
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob.
- Take care if you're wearing loose clothing – this can easily catch fire.
- Avoid leaving children in the kitchen alone when cooking. Keep matches and saucepan handles out of their reach to keep them safe.
- Take care with electrics - keep leads and appliances away from water and place grills and toasters away from curtains and kitchen rolls.
- Keep your equipment clean and in good working order. A build-up of fat and grease can ignite a fire.
- Don't cook after drinking alcohol or using drugs that effect your judgement.
- Hot oil can catch fire easily - be careful that it doesn't overheat.
- Never throw water on a chip pan fire.
- In the event of a fire, have an escape plan in place.

- Don't take risks by tackling a fire. **Get out, stay out and call 999.**
- Make sure you have at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home and test them weekly.

Councillor Christine Bateson, Community Safety Member Champion, said: "Half of all accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen - often because of distractions like phone calls or family. It is very important that you keep a close eye on the hob or oven to make sure you and your loved ones stay safe."

ENDS.