

# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

*Department of Fire Programs  
Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office*

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***Watch what you heat – one of every three home fires begins in the kitchen***

*Governor proclaims Oct. 8 – 14 Virginia Fire Prevention Week*

**Richmond, VA** – One out of every three home fires begins in the kitchen – more than any other place in the home – according to the latest research from the [National Fire Protection Association](#) (NFPA). In Virginia, cooking fires accounted for 2,147 out of 7,671, or 28 percent, of residential structure fires in 2005, according to Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS). Cooking fires are also the leading cause of fire-related injuries.

Governor Kaine has proclaimed Oct. 8 – 14 Virginia Fire Prevention Week, in coordination with the national observance. The Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office (VSFMO) and the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) are joining forces with the nonprofit NFPA to remind Virginians to *Prevent Cooking Fires: Watch What You Heat*.

"Often when called to a fire that started in the kitchen, the residents tell us that they only left the kitchen for a few minutes," said State Fire Marshal Ed Altizer. "Sadly, that's all it takes for a dangerous fire to start. We hope the extra attention given Fire Prevention Week will help us reach individuals in the community before they've suffered a damaging lesson."

During this year's fire safety campaign, firefighters and safety advocates will be spreading the word about the dangers of cooking fires - most of which result from unattended cooking - and teaching their local residents how to prevent cooking fires from starting in the first place.

"It's all about practicing the fundamental principles of home fire safety," said FDFP Executive Director W.G. "Billy" Shelton. "You have to practice fire safety not just in the kitchen during Fire Prevention Week, but throughout your home every week of the year."

Cooking safety tips include:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, broiling, or boiling food;
- If you must leave the room, even for a short period of time, turn off the stove;
- When you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, stay in the home, and use a timer to remind you;

- If you have young children, use the stove's back burners whenever possible. Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the stove;
- When you cook, wear clothing with tight-fitting sleeves;
- Keep potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper and plastic bags, towels, and anything else that can burn away from your stovetop; and
- Clean up food and grease from burners and stovetops.

Fire Prevention Week is actively supported by fire departments across Virginia. This is the 85<sup>th</sup> year that fire departments have observed Fire Prevention Week, making it the longest running public health and safety observance on record.

The Virginia State Fire Marshal's office is a part of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and utilizes 34 inspectors and engineers located across the state to conduct fire safety inspections, building plan reviews and construction inspection for fire safety systems. These inspectors provide assistance to local building and fire code officials and respond to complaints and questions from private citizens.

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) provides fire and emergency services support to communities throughout Virginia in the areas of professional development, public fire and life safety education, technical assistance, research, advocacy, operational support and funding.

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