

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Grilling B-roll available here: <https://youtu.be/2ldZM1HBTxY> (please courtesy the Mississippi Fire Marshal Office)

START THE FOOD, NOT A FIRE, THIS LABOR DAY

JACKSON - As Mississippians fire up their grills and smokers this Labor Day, Insurance Commissioner and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney has some safety tips to avoid fires outside and indoors.

In 2018, **11 out of 80 fire deaths in Mississippi were caused by cooking-related fires**. So far in 2019, there have been 2 cooking-related fire deaths.

“In many of these cases, food was left unattended and there weren’t smoke alarms in the home,” said State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney. “Overall, fire related deaths are down in 2019. At last check, there have been 38 fire deaths statewide compared to 57 at this time last year. I want to continue to see a decrease over the remainder of the year.”

To that end, the Mississippi State Fire Marshal’s Office recommends these grilling and cooking safety tips:

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grill surface and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.

Charcoal grills

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
 - If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
 - Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.

- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord approved for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

Propane grills

- Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using propane grills for the first time each year.
- Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. A propane leak will release bubbles. If your grill has a gas leak, and there is no flame, turn off the gas tank and grill.
- If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.
- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.

Stand by your Pan

- Be on alert. If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stovetop or oven.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food.
- If you must leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, boiling or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that the stove or oven is on.
- Keep in mind that you should avoid wearing loose clothing or dangling sleeves while cooking. Loose clothing can catch fire if it comes in contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

No kids allowed

- Keep kids away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet (1 meter) around the stove.
- If you have young children, use the stove's back burners whenever possible, and turn pot handles inward to reduce the risk that pots with hot contents will be knocked over.
- Never hold a small child while cooking.

Keep it clean

- Keep anything that can catch fire—pot holders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels or curtains—away from your stovetop.
- Clean up food and grease from burners and the stovetop.

Smoke Alarms

- Commissioner Chaney recommends having a smoke alarm inside each bedroom.

- Smoke alarms should be checked every month and replaced every 10 years.

For more fire safety tips, visit the State Fire Marshal page of the Mississippi Insurance Department website at: www.mid.ms.gov

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