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FIRE SAFETY FOR THE HOLIDAYS...

(Anchorage, Alaska) Cooking and heating-related incidents are the leading cause of residential structure fires in Alaska, accounting for almost 75% of the state's total reported residential structure fires. With the holidays approaching, warm, cozy homes and holiday feasts play a major role in our preparations for family gatherings. Unsafe cooking during these holiday gatherings can increase the risk for fire.

These fires can be prevented by simply following a few safety precautions;

- Pay particular attention while cooking, especially when using oils and grease. Cooking appliances should be kept clean of food and grease build-up.
- Young children should be kept away from cooking appliances to prevent any mishaps.
- It's always a good idea to use back burners when possible and keep pot handles turned to the inside so they won't be pulled or knocked over.
- Check stoves and other appliances before going to bed or leaving your home to make sure that the units are left in the "off" position.
- Keep combustible materials like holiday decorations at least 36 inches from heat sources.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions when using space heaters. All heaters should be approved by a recognized testing authority such as Underwriter's Laboratories.

If a fire occurs in a pan the most effective and safest method of control is to apply a lid to the pan. Never carry a pan that's on fire, it may ignite clothes, or spill, causing severe burns. If the fire is inside your oven, turn off the heat and leave the door closed to cut off the fire's air supply.

Alaska State Fire Marshal David Tyler adds, "fire safe behavior can keep a fire from starting. Working smoke alarms, planning and practicing your fire escape plan and adding residential fire suppression sprinklers can ensure your family's safety from a fire that occurs during the holidays."

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