



Fire-Safe Cooking: A Recipe for Saving Lives

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Contact:
David Neidlinger: dneidlinger@hagersharp.com
Christy Bennett: cbennett@hagersharp.com
Phone: (202) 842-3600

FIRE-SAFE SUMMER COOKING TIPS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS *“STOP Fire” Campaign Materials Now Available to Prevent Cooking Fire Injuries and Deaths*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (IABPFF) is working to make summer cooking safer for African Americans by rolling out an educational video and additional fire safety materials through its **STOP Fire Campaign**. The campaign materials, which are being introduced in 11 cities this summer, address residential cooking fire safety for African Americans, with specific attention to two groups: parents and caregivers of children four to 14-years-old and seniors ages 65 to 85. The campaign’s theme is *Fire-Safe Cooking: A Recipe for Saving Lives*.

In August 2008, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) awarded a grant to the IABPFF to implement the **STOP Fire Campaign**, which will help reduce home fires, injuries, and deaths associated with cooking, especially during the holiday season and large family gatherings.

“The summertime creates the perfect atmosphere for great outdoor and indoor cooking, but the entire family needs to know how to cook safely,” said IABPFF President Joseph Muhammad. “Barbeque grills are sometimes left unattended and now that children are home from school, many are cooking on their own, so we want to prevent hazards that can cause a deadly fire in minutes.”

The **STOP Fire Campaign** seeks to spread the campaign messages to African Americans across the country through train-the trainer workshops. A nine-minute educational video, brochure, poster, and fact sheet will be incorporated into the workshops and distributed to attendees at **STOP Fire** campaign community events. Initial cities for this summer’s outreach include: Los Angeles, CA; Oakland, CA; Richmond, CA; Miami, FL; Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; New Orleans, LA; Rochester, NY; Cleveland, OH; Philadelphia, PA; and Houston, TX.

“The **STOP Fire Campaign** materials are simple, engaging, and offer people some basic steps on what they can do to prevent and ultimately stop cooking fire injuries and deaths among African-American children and seniors,” said President Muhammad.

Across the United States, fires continue to disproportionately devastate minority and African-American families despite persistent community initiatives made by the fire departments to implement long-lasting fire prevention programs. The very young and older adults continue to be high-risk groups for fire deaths.

The U.S. Fire Administration’s National Fire Data Center reported in *Fire in the United States 1995-2004* that:

- African Americans and American Indians have much higher fire death rates per capita than the national average.
- African Americans comprise a larger share of total fire deaths, accounting for 24 percent of fire deaths; nearly twice as high as their share of the overall population.
- The largest percent of fires in 2004 (76%) occurred in one and two-family residences with cooking being the leading cause of fire (28%).
- The very young as well as older adults represent over one-third of all fire deaths.
- Approximately 1,100 people ages 65 and older are killed in home fires every year.
- As seniors age their risk of death from a home fire increases. People between ages 75 and 84 are nearly four times as likely to die, while seniors ages 85 and older are more than five times as likely to die.

(OVER)



IABPFF believes that holidays, such as the Fourth of July, Christmas, and Kwanzaa as well as family reunions provide the perfect opportunity to bring attention to cooking-related fires, injuries, and deaths in the African-American community. Many parents and caregivers prepare celebratory meals with their families over the summer and holidays, both outside and inside of the home. In the event of a fire, people are often unaware of how to put out or escape from a fire. Knowing how to prevent a cooking fire or what to do if a fire breaks out can mean the difference between a joyous or disastrous family gathering.

A few tips from the *STOP Fire Campaign* include:

- While grilling keep, matches, lighters, and starter fluid in a locked drawer or cabinet out of the reach of children and away from the flames. Never leave a hot grill unattended.
- Teach teens how to safely cook when at home. Make sure they know what to do if a fire breaks out.
- Most kitchen fires occur because food is left unattended on the stove or in the oven.
- Keep towels, pot holders and curtains away from flames, ovens and stove tops. Always wear short or tight-fitting sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes into contact with a gas flame or electric burner.
- Heat cooking oils gradually and use extra caution when deep-frying. If a fire breaks out in a pan, put a lid on the pan. **Never** throw water on a grease fire.
- Keep young children at least 3 feet away from any place where hot food or drink is being prepared or carried, such as the oven, stove, or grill. Designate a “kid-free zone.”
- Plug microwave ovens, toaster ovens, and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire.
- Have working smoke alarms in your home. If a smoke alarm sounds during normal cooking, press the hush button if the smoke alarm has one. Open the door or window or fan the area with a towel to get the air moving. Do not disable the smoke alarm or take out the batteries.
- Stay alert! To prevent cooking fires, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.
- Purchase a fire extinguisher and **be trained** on the proper use and maintenance of the extinguisher.
- Prepare and practice an escape route with the entire family, including children and senior citizens.
- If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, and roll. Stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover your face with your hands. Roll over and over or back and forth to put out the fire. Immediately cool the burn with cool water for 3 to 5 minutes and then seek emergency medical care.
- When in doubt, get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. **Never go back inside a burning home.** Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number *after* you escape.

Additional tips and information about the campaign are available at www.iabpff.org. Campaign materials are available for free download through www.iabpff.org. To place an order of hardcopy campaign materials, please e-mail the request to Teresa Everett at excedir411@hotmail.com.

To arrange an interview with a spokesperson from the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters, please call (202) 842-3600 or email STOPfire@hagerssharp.com.

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The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (IABPFF) is a non-profit organization organized in Hartford, Connecticut on October 3, 1970. The organization grew out of the need to address the lack of substantial access into the Fire Service and the lack of upward mobility opportunities for Blacks and minorities. The IABPFF serves as a convening entity for Black fire fighters to address the employment, professional development and community fire prevention concerns for Fire Service members from across the United States and other countries where IABPFF members are located. The IABPFF currently has a membership of approximately 5,500 men and women from across the United States, the Caribbean, England and Africa. The IABPFF serves as the umbrella organization for the Black Chief Officers Committee (BCOC) and Black Women in the Fire Service (BWFS).