



Fire-Safe Cooking: A Recipe for Saving Lives

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS LAUNCHES "STOP FIRE CAMPAIGN" JUST IN TIME FOR HOLIDAY COOKING *Campaign to "STOP" Cooking Fire Injuries and Deaths of Children and Seniors.*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (IABPFF) announced its *STOP Fire Campaign* today, which addresses 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*. 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.

"It's always wonderful to get together with family and friends during the holiday, but it's critical that people take certain precautions when cooking," said IABPFF President Joseph Muhammad. "Food left unattended or a spatter of grease on a stove can cause a massive fire in seconds." He continues, "Children and seniors are most vulnerable when a fire occurs, and this campaign will show parents and caregivers ways to prevent these tragedies from happening."

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.

IABPFF believes that holidays such as Christmas, Kwanzaa, Fourth of July, and events such 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 holidays, both inside and outside 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 holiday.

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The **STOP Fire Campaign** seeks to spread the campaign messages to African Americans across the country. Over the coming months, the IABPFF will add materials such as a fact sheet, brochure, poster and educational video to supplement the **STOP Fire Campaign**, and will work with their members in a number of cities to host train-the-trainer workshops about this campaign. Some of the cities for 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.

President Muhammad said, “The **STOP Fire Campaign** materials will be 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.”

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

- 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.”
- 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.
- 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 face with 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. 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).