



# Interactive display: Put a lid on a grease fire

by Kellie Murphy-Ringate, Fire Inspector - Excelsior Fire District

Since 2009, the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association Public Education Committee has showcased a kitchen fire demonstration during Governor's Fire Prevention Day at the State Fair. The goal of this eye-opening teaching tool is to show people how to put out a grease fire — and it has been effective as well as cost-efficient.

## Props and Supplies Needed

The main prop is a gas or electric stovetop with burners. You don't need the entire stove, but it's preferable because you can also teach about oven fires. The stove does not have to work (there is no heat or fire during the lesson) and should not be turned on for the demonstration. Call a local appliance store or recycling center and see if they'll lend or give you a stove. Offer to acknowledge their contribution publicly. If you can't find a stove or a stovetop, borrow a gas stove grate and place it on a small table.



You will need a few other household supplies:

- Pans with lids, to teach “put a lid on a grease fire.”
- An oven mitt or pot holder, to show the safe way to put the lid on.
- Flour, sugar, baking soda, salt, and water, to show what to avoid putting on a grease fire.

Making sure the flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and water are clearly labeled, place a big red X on the bags or containers so that passersby will not think those items should be used.



If you have collected artifacts from cooking fires in your community, display them along with the fire causes, what was damaged, and the costs of the fires.

Lastly, you will need to have at least two outgoing, energetic and knowledgeable firefighters willing to pick people out of the crowd and invite them to the display area.

## Set-Up

Display the stove, stovetop or grate with the burner dial on. Put a pan on the stove with the lid nearby. Place the pot holder or oven mitt next to the stove.



On a table next to the stove put the flour, sugar, salt, baking soda, water jug, and fact sheets.

If you have artifacts from cooking fires, place them on the same table or near the display.

## Teaching at the Display

Main teaching point: “Put a lid on grease fires”

Have one firefighter approach people walking by — anyone who cooks, pre-teens through seniors. The firefighter should tell the person they

choose, “I have a grease fire on the stove top and don't know how to put it out.” The person should be brought to the stovetop and the firefighter should repeat, “I have a grease fire here, and I'm panicking. What should I do?”

- If person chooses one of the products on the display it should be explained why they don't want to use that product.

- If the participant says to take the pot off the stove, explain that the pan should be left on the stove until it cools down.

- If participants suggest a fire extinguisher, say you don't have one. This is a good time to ask if they have extinguishers, talk about extinguisher types and discuss placement.

- If the participant is totally stumped, do some coaching to help them come up with an answer. One way is to talk about how fire needs oxygen, and that it can be smothered. What would do that with the materials on hand?

- If a participant says “put a lid on it,” ask the participant to do it. If they do not slide the lid on to the pan it should be explained why they want to slide it on and then demonstrated — with a reminder to use an oven mitt or pan holder.

Once the lid is on the grease fire, the firefighter should ask, “What's the next step?” If it doesn't come instantly, do some coaching until the participant turns off the burner.

If the stove has dials on the back edge, teach the participant not to reach over the fire to turn off the burner. The lid must be put over the grease fire first.

Usually people will gather around to watch the demonstration, and though it takes only a couple of minutes, you'll end up teaching a small crowd each time you select someone to participate.

If time allows or you have an extra volunteer, keep track how many contacts you made and how the participants responded.

You will focus on one lesson, but other teaching opportunities almost always arise and should be addressed when they do. Some other kitchen-related fire safety messages include:

*(Grease fire cont. on page 14)*

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*(Grease fire cont. from page 10)*

- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Keep pot handles turned in so they can't be grabbed by children.
- Keep a three-foot safe area for pets and kids around the stove.
- Close ovens and microwaves if the contents catch on fire.
- Keep stove tops neat and clean.
- Wear tight fitting sleeves when cooking on the stove top.
- 49 percent of Minnesota fires in 2009 were due to unattended cooking.

#### **HANDOUTS AND PAMPHLETS**

Give your visitors information to take home with them. You can order kitchen fire safety brochures from several different companies or type the information on fire department letterhead.

The MSFCA created a booklet for the display at the State Fair called Recipe Book for Fire Safety. The booklet (MS Word document) can be read online or downloaded for printing. The booklet is also set up for printing at Riverfront printing in Shakopee; contact Kellie for more information. You are free to place your logo on the booklet alongside the MSFCA logo.

Please contact Kellie at 952-960-1692 or [kmurphyringate@excelsior-fire.org](mailto:kmurphyringate@excelsior-fire.org) with questions or requests for more information. ●

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