

KITCHEN FIRES IN CAMPUS HOUSING



OCTOBER 2024

This safety information is intended to help on-campus residents prevent fires when cooking and respond if a fire occurs.

Please share this information with others.

UW CAMPUS FIRES

In the past eleven UW school years (from 2013-14 to 2023-24) there have been 166 reported fires on UW campuses.

Among the 62 fires that occurred in campus housing:

- 26 were cooking fires (42%)
- 13 fires were incendiary/suspicious (21%)

Contributors

The following factors have contributed to cooking fires:

- Unattended cooking
- Cooking with oil and grease
- Incorrect attempt to extinguish the fire



Stove top cooking fire damage

REPORT FIRES

Report all instances of open flame, or burning that produces smoke (with or without a flame) to:

UW Environmental Health & Safety

uwfire@uw.edu or (206) 685-0341

FOLLOW SAFE COOKING PRACTICES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FIRE AND INJURY:

- **Never leave oil/grease cooking unattended.**
- **Gradually raise the temperature** of cooking oil/grease to the preferred cooking temperature rather than starting at the highest setting.
- If the oil/grease starts smoking or catches fire, **smother the fire** by placing a lid on the pan and **turn off the heat source.**
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.
- Only use **baking soda** or a dry **chemical fire extinguisher** on an oil/grease fire.
- **Never pour water** on an oil or grease fire.
- **Call 9-1-1** if a fire is too large to safely put out.

COOKING FIRE STATS

Fire departments across the U.S. responded to an estimated average of 3,379 structure fires in on- and off-campus residences each year from 2017 to 2021.

- Approximately 75% of fires began in the kitchen or cooking area.
- **Cooking equipment** was involved in nearly 9 out of 10 fires.
- **Unattended equipment** was the most common factor contributing to the ignition of these fires.

The vast majority of reported cooking fires were small. The percentage of apartment fires started by cooking was nearly twice that of cooking fires in one- or two-family homes.

Cooking fires that ignite with oil or grease result in **serious injuries and fatalities** at a higher rate than other food or cooking fires.

Additional information about home cooking fires is available from the [National Fire Protection Association](#).

STAY SAFE WHEN COOKING

Some types of cooking, such as frying, broiling, and boiling, need continuous attention. When simmering, baking, or roasting, cooks should stay in or near the kitchen and check on the cooking regularly. If you need to leave the kitchen, use a timer to remind yourself to return and check on the cooking.

Follow the **safe cooking practices** on page 1 to reduce the risk of fire and injury.

All fires, explosions, and hazardous material spills at any University location **must be reported immediately by calling 9-1-1 and/or activating the fire alarm system**. These incidents must also be reported to EH&S.

CAMPUS FIRE INFORMATION

UW Environmental Health & Safety investigates fire incidents in coordination with the local fire department to determine their cause, provide consultation for preventing fires in the future, and to document the incident for reporting purposes. All fires are reportable by law.

The University adheres to the [Campus Fire Safety Right-to-Know Act](#) by documenting and sharing fire incident reports with the campus community for fire safety education and to prevent future incidents.

- Read the [UW Annual Security and Fire Safety Report](#) for more information about safety and security incidents at all UW campuses.
- The UW maintains a [Campus Fire Log](#) that lists fire incidents that occur in all University campus housing locations.

RESOURCES

- [National Fire Protection Association website](#)
- [UW EH&S Fire Safety and Prevention page](#)
- [U.S. Fire Administration: Fire Safety for College Students](#)
- [Seattle Fire Department cooking safety video](#)
Available in 12 languages and American Sign Language.



Source: Seattle Fire Department

Please contact EH&S at 206.685.0341 or uwfire@uw.edu for more information about fire safety and prevention.