

October 9, 2006

## **FIRE PREVENTION WEEK**

### **State Fire Marshal Urges Safety in the Kitchen**

BISMARCK – This week, October 8 through October 14, is ‘National Fire Prevention Week,’ reminds State Fire Marshal Ray Lambert. The Fire Marshal’s office, a division of the Attorney General’s office, joins the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) each year to focus attention on fire prevention, safety, and awareness in the community. This year’s theme is “Prevent Cooking Fires: Watch What You Heat.”

"When fire fighters respond to a fire that started in the kitchen, the survivors often say they only left the kitchen for a moment," said Lambert. "Sadly, that's all it takes for a dangerous fire to start. We hope that Fire Prevention Week will help us reach folks in the community before they've suffered a damaging lesson."

Fire Prevention Week is held during the week in which October 9<sup>th</sup> occurs to commemorate the start of the Great Chicago Fire. The fire began on October 8, 1871, but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9. In that short time the fire killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres. It also changed the way public officials thought about fire safety. In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation, and Fire Prevention Week has been observed since 1922.

According to the latest NFPA research, cooking is the leading cause of home fires. One out of three home fires begins in the kitchen—more than any other place in the home. Cooking fires are also the leading cause of home fire-related injuries.

“Evenings are such a busy time in most households that it is easy to become distracted while cooking. But even a few seconds’ inattention can result in a burn, or worse, a fire,” said Lambert, who offered the following kitchen safety tips:

- Never leave the kitchen while something is cooking. Continuously check items baking in the oven.
- If you have young children, use the stove’s back burners whenever possible. Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the stove.
- Wipe up grease that could catch fire, and keep ovens clean from spills. Keep the area on and around the range top clear of pot holders, food packaging, and all other combustibles. Keep dish towels, curtains, and anything that may burn away from your stove.
- Never cook if you are tired or sleepy, if you have been drinking alcohol, or if you have been taking medications that make you drowsy.

- Dress for the occasion by wearing tight-fitting clothing or roll up your sleeves. Loose clothing can catch fire.

Lambert also reminds people to always report a fire to the local fire department, even if it seems the fire has been put out.