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Planning to Deep Fry Your Thanksgiving Turkey? Think Twice!

*The California Association of Code Enforcement Officers
cautions Californians about the dangers of deep fryers*

SACRAMENTO, CA — As Americans plan their Thanksgiving meals, many opt to deep fry their turkeys, which is much less time consuming and results in a moist, delicious bird. However, cooking a turkey in three gallons or more of oil, heated by propane, can be very dangerous. The California Association of Code Enforcement Officers (CACEO) discourages the use of turkey fryers as do the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the American Burn Association (ABA).

“This method of cooking can result in fires, burns and other injuries,” cautions Pete Piccardo, CACEO board member and committee chair. Here are just a few examples of what can happen:

- Fryers can tip over easily, spilling scalding hot oil over a large area and on anyone nearby.
- When placing the turkey in the fryer, hot oil may spill onto the burner and cause a fire. It only takes a small amount of oil on the burner to cause a large fire.
- Units without automatic thermostat controls to regulate the temperature of the oil may cause it to overheat to the point of combustion or to boil over and catch fire.
- The sides, handles and lids of the fryer can get very hot and cause severe burns.
- Some fryers display independent product safety-testing labels; however, the certifications sometimes apply only to a single component of the device.

For those who prefer deep-fried turkey, CACEO recommends having a professional prepare the bird or ordering one from a supermarket or restaurant. For those who still insist on using a deep fryer, CACEO offers the following cautionary tips:

- Carefully read and follow all directions that come with the fryer.
- Always use the fryer outdoors and place it on a solid, level surface safely away from buildings and flammable materials. Never use it in an enclosed area, such as a carport, in a garage or on a wooden deck.
- Never leave the fryer unattended. It can overheat and catch fire.
- Keep pets and children away from the fryer when it's in use and until it completely cools. The oil can remain hot for several hours.
- Don safety goggles, wear long-sleeved clothing and use insulated oven mitts to protect yourself from splattering oil.
- Do not overfill the fryer.
- Use only fully thawed turkeys in the fryer. Partially thawed birds can cause the hot oil to splatter.

- Keep fire extinguishers within reach.
- Call 911 immediately if a fire occurs.

Every holiday season, burn centers throughout the United States treat people burned by turkey fryers. Often, those victims are children. According to the NFPA and ABA, “turkey fryers are dangerous...like no other cooking appliance. Gallons of oil heated in excess of 350 degrees Fahrenheit can quickly ignite if something goes wrong, and house and garage fires have been started from using them.”

“Code Enforcement Officers work diligently to improve safety in California communities,” noted Mr. Piccardo. “Our goal in sharing this information is to educate the public and encourage those individuals choosing to deep fry their turkeys to take the necessary precautionary measures that allow them to spend time at home with their families during the holidays rather than in a hospital.”

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CACEO exists to promote and advance the profession of code enforcement while serving and supporting its members by offering comprehensive education and certification, providing legislative advocacy on issues of importance to the code enforcement profession, and facilitating a network for an exchange of information and technology. For more information, visit www.caceo.us.