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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***The State Fire Marshal's Office Reminds West Virginians to
"Watch What You Heat"***

Fire Prevention Week is getting closer! From October 8-14, the WV State Fire Marshal's Office is joining forces with the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to remind West Virginians to **'Prevent Cooking Fires: Watch What You Heat.'** During this year's fire safety campaign, firefighters and safety advocates will be spreading the word about the dangers of cooking fires--most of which result from unattended cooking—and teaching local residents how to prevent cooking fires from starting in the first place.

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. In West Virginia, cooking accounted for 10% of fire causes (335 fires) reported by fire departments from July 2004 through June 2005. In 2005, 397 fires started in the cooking area of the kitchen. Cooking materials (edible items, grease, etc.) were the first items ignited in at least 112 of these fires.

"Often when fire departments are called to a fire that started in the kitchen, the occupants say that they only left the kitchen for a few minutes," said Sterling Lewis, State Fire Marshal. "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."

Among the safety tips that firefighters and safety advocates will be emphasizing:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, broiling, or boiling food.

Press Release: Prevent Cooking Fires: “Watch What You Heat”

Page 2

- If you must leave the room, even for a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- When you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, stay in the home, and use a timer to remind you.
- 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.
- When you cook, wear clothing with tight-fitting sleeves.
- Keep potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper and plastic bags, towels, and anything else that can burn away from your stovetop.
- Clean up food and grease from burners and stovetops.
- Know how to safely extinguish a grease fire in a pan. NEVER try to move the pan. Instead, turn off the burner, slide a lid over the pan from the side (to avoid burns), and let the pan cool down on its own.
- Make sure older children know how to safely use the stove and microwave, and that they understand what to do in case of fire.
- As always, it’s the adult’s primary responsibility to keep family members safe from fire. ***This means teaching everyone—including young children--about fire prevention, making and practicing a home escape plan, and keeping smoke detectors in good working order!***

Fire Prevention Week is actively supported by fire departments across the country. This is the 85th year that fire departments have observed **Fire Prevention Week**, making it the longest running public health and safety observance on record.

REMINDER: October 29th (when we change our clocks back to Standard Time) has been designated as the day to “Change Your Clocks, Change Your Batteries” by the International Association of Fire Chiefs. This fire safety campaign, which is in its 19th year, raises awareness of the need to keep working smoke detectors in the home, maintaining and testing them regularly, and changing the battery on an easy-to-remember date, such as when noting *Daylight Savings Time*....

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