

1

Nutrition

2

Operations
Food Safety
2620

3

Administration

4

Communications &
Marketing

» to *your credit*

Making the grade in your profession

Out of the Frying Pan...

By Rachel E. O'Connell

» Where's the fire? Let's hope it's not in your school kitchen.

L“Liar, liar, pants on fire,” is a common playground taunt. Children shout it with wild abandon, unafraid that the metaphor will come to fruition. After all, they regularly practice orderly escape drills in school classrooms, hallways and buses. How often do they actually *experience* a fire emergency firsthand?

While not as prevalent as childhood untruths, U.S. fire departments responded to an average 5,100 fires on educational properties annually between 2009 and 2013, 70% of which took place in K-12 locations. An estimated 20% of these fires, totaling \$88 million in property damage, began in a school kitchen, reports the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The good news is that there has not been a truly catastrophic K-12 fire (resulting in 10 or more deaths) since 1958 when a fire at Our Lady of the Angels School in Chicago left 95 dead. Still, *any* fire has potential to cause tragedy, and one injury or death is one too many. NFPA reports that one-fifth of fires on educational properties that begin

in a kitchen or cooking space cause 11% of injuries to civilians and result in an average of one death per year.

BEAT THE HEAT You know better than most that cooking in a foodservice kitchen, such as a restaurant or a school, is a different experience than cooking at home. Besides the drastic disparity in cuisine and yield, the basic environment and equipment also contrast. Still, one thing the two settings have in common is a number of risks for fire.

According to NFPA data, cooking/cooking equipment is the leading source of all home fires in the United States, as well as all the top cause of foodservice fires (*see the graph at left*). Heating equipment, electrical equipment, smoking materials and arson are other common causes of foodservice fires. A little more than one-third of all fires at educational locales are caused by cooking equipment.

Think of how you work in your kitchens at home or school; you probably believe you are meticulous in following protocols for reducing the risk of a fire, but you are only human and mistakes happen. It's difficult to guard against every possible risk, and these can add up. Food left unsupervised for a few moments on the stovetop. Spilled grease you didn't get a chance to clean. Dish towel dropped too close to

Earn 1 CEU in the designated Key area and Key Topic Code noted above



IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Most schools and districts have specific emergency procedures for all personnel to follow. It's likely that they include calling 9-1-1 without delay. But do you know how to make that call most effective? The following guidelines are practical steps to take whether calling from work or home.



- ▶ Immediately dial 9-1-1.
 - ▶ Be direct and to the point: Provide your name, location and the exact situation to the dispatcher.
 - ▶ Answer all questions. Remain calm.
 - ▶ If medical attention is needed, alert the dispatcher. Be prepared to describe symptoms and perform any instructions detailed to you.
 - ▶ Tell the operator where you will meet the first responders, whether fire or EMS personnel. You don't want to waste time when directing them to the appropriate location.
- ▶ Remember that the most important thing you can do when calling 9-1-1 is to *listen carefully*.
- ▶ If the situation changes significantly and responders have not arrived, call 9-1-1 again to relay new details.

an active burner. Cleaning chemicals misplaced in storage. Hot products discarded with highly combustible paper products. Then there's that one loose electrical plug that has always bothered you. Suddenly, the risks seem overwhelming—and so do the consequences. Now, factor in the risks that *aren't* related to human error.

Last fall, a gas leak from a cooking appliance caused a fire in a school in Defiance County, Ohio. This past March, a school in Mannsville, Okla., was evacuated after an electrical fire sparked in the kitchen. A school in Doral, Fla., found itself in the hot seat just last month when a bird's nest, of all things, ignited in one of the cafeteria exhaust fans. How do you guard against *those*?

Take another look at the graph on page 73. It's not hot in here—you *did* read that 5% of foodservice kitchen fires are *intentionally* set. But NFPA finds that arson is much more prevalent in school fires. In fact, arson is the leading cause of fires on educational properties, sweeping other categories aside at 38%. This includes classrooms, playgrounds, gyms *and* cafeterias.

DON'T GET BURNED So, what can you do when arsonists, grease, electricity and birds conspire? Following are steps to take to reduce your risks for a fire emergency in a school nutrition setting.

1. How old are the facilities where

you have full prep kitchens or even just re-therm equipment? New construction and renovations are usually held to a higher standard to meet current building codes, but if you oversee operations at sites that were around when you attended school, when you should confirm that these have **automatic, up-to-date fire suppression systems** in place.

2. Schedule **regular maintenance check-ups for all kitchen systems.**

Cooking equipment is important to

keep in top working order, but so are other areas of your operation. Get *everything* checked—electrical, refrigeration and exhaust, as well as fire suppression and extinguisher systems. It's not uncommon for school nutrition operations to baby kitchen equipment long past their prime. Work with maintenance personnel to review aging equipment *specifically* for fire risks.

3. Your school kitchen is required by different local, state and federal codes to have a certain number and type of **fire extinguishers** easily accessible (*see the box below*). Review where these are stored and ensure that all staff—including substitutes—are aware of their location and proper use.

4. Keep a **clean, safe kitchen.** Guard against built-up grease, particularly on exhaust hoods. Store chemicals and flammable liquids properly. Ensure that paper and fabric items are kept away from ranges. Dispose of trash, cardboard and similar flammable items properly.

5. **Limit off-hours access** to the kitchen and cafeteria to guard against potential arson. Make sure that there is little to attract a fire-bug that may get into the kitchen by keeping potential combustibles under separate lock and key.

6. Create a "**Kitchen Fire Safety Training Plan**" to use with staff at each



EXTINGUISH THAT!

Fires are not created equal. While your instinct may be to treat flames and smoke the same way every time, you can make the situation much worse. The source of

a fire dictates how it's treated. Fires have been classified into different categories based on how they combusted and the material that's providing their fuel. Extinguishers have been developed to help combat various classifications of fire.

- ▶ **Class A**—These are caused by wood, cloth (such as dish towels), many types of plastic, etc. You can use almost any extinguisher, including water, to smother these ordinary combustibles.
- ▶ **Class B**—These fires are fueled by grease, flammable chemicals, oil and gas. Use a regulation ABC extinguisher or carbon dioxide. **DO NOT USE WATER.**
- ▶ **Class C**—Electrical equipment fires can be put out using either carbon dioxide or an ABC extinguisher. **DO NOT USE WATER.**
- ▶ **Class D**—Fires that involve combustible metals, such as magnesium and potassium, should be addressed with a metal extinguishing agent or sand.
- ▶ **Class K**—These high-heat fires involve combustible cooking media, such as vegetables, animal oils and/or fats.

individual site. Your plan should review causes, prevention, fire extinguisher use, 911 protocol, evacuation routes, treating minor burns and other first aid steps. Review this even with longtime staff at least once a year.

HEAT AND SERVE Have you ever participated in Fire Prevention Week activities? Sponsored by the NFPA, this observance runs Sunday, October 8 to Saturday, October 14 in 2017. If you're looking for a way to both take the heat and stay *in* the kitchen, this is the way to do it. Organize and participate in various activities that will raise your own awareness about appropriate fire prevention steps and help you do the same among your staff and the students you serve.

Start by reaching out to your local fire department. Is someone there willing to come to your site and do a training with staff on how to identify and minimize risks, respond to an incident and treat a burn? Can they direct you to free resources with key information that you can share with staff or parents? Are these available in other languages besides English? Work with the school principal to organize an activity to teach kids and staff about fire safety in general, as well as about being prepared for an emergency in the cafeteria. It's important to convey this information without causing undue anxiety or fear. Ask firefighters and EMS personnel to act as special guest servers at lunch. Cafeteria staff members might don plastic red fire hats. With older students, use your menu to help get across the message: Serve up a spicy dish, encouraging them to enjoy "fiery foods without burning down the house."

Is a fire in your school kitchen an eventuality? No. Like any disaster, it's a possibility. So, just like tornado drills and packing down bags of sand before a hurricane, there are things you can do to minimize the risk and the potential consequences: Make sure to have a great fire safety plan, train your staff, maintain your equipment and take preventative measures. If disaster does strike, you'll be ready. **SN**

Rachel O'Connell is communications coordinator for School Nutrition.

2

Operations
Food Safety
2620

» the *test*



Go to: www.schoolnutrition.org/OnlinePDAs

"Out of the Frying Pan"

Completion of this test, with a passing score, will count as 1 Continuing Education Unit (CEU) in **Key Area 2, Operations, Code 2620.**

Please Print

Name: _____

SNA Member Number: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

1. Fires originating in K-12 school kitchen areas caused ___ in damage between 2009 and 2013.

- \$8 million
- \$18 million
- \$88 million
- \$800 million

2. In ___, a catastrophic school fire in Chicago caused 95 deaths.

- 1928
- 1958
- 2008
- 1888

3. Cooking/cooking equipment is the leading cause of ___ fires in the United States.

- home
- foodservice
- both home and foodservice
- none of the above

4. In April 2017, a fire in a Florida school cafeteria was caused by a ___.

- piece of burnt toast
- pile of free/reduced applications
- bird's nest
- none of the above

5. Arson is the leading cause of fires on educational properties.

- True
- False

6. Check ___ equipment for potential fire risks.

- cooking
- refrigeration
- exhaust
- all of the above

7. Substitutes working at your site should be told where fire extinguishers are stored.

- True
- False

8. Fire Prevention Week is held annually every ___.

- February
- July
- October
- none of the above

9. Fires fueled by wood, grease or combustible metals are all considered Class A fires.

- True
- False

10. Never use water to extinguish a fire caused by ___.

- grease
- oil
- electrical equipment
- all of the above

TEST COMPLETION & SUBMISSION DETAILS

To earn 1 Continuing Education Credit (CEU) toward SNA's Certificate/Credentialing programs for this professional development article (PDA) test, you must achieve a passing score and the issue date (**May 2017**) must not be older than five (5) years from your Certificate/Credentialing period. A maximum of three (3) PDAs per year is allowable for SNA's Certificate in School Nutrition program. There is no maximum of passing PDAs for those with the SNS Credential, submitted within the three-year period.

To pay by check: Mail this completed form before your expiration date. Include \$11 (SNA Members) or \$17 (non-members) for processing to: SNA, Attn: PDA, PO Box 759297, Baltimore, MD 21275-9297. Do not send cash!

To pay by credit card: Pay for and take the test online at www.schoolnutrition.org/OnlinePDAs. Processing fees for tests completed online are \$9 (SNA Members) or \$15 (non-members).

Due to administrative costs, refunds will not be made for any reason.