

# Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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November 24, 2015

## “Warning: Turkey fryers can be hazardous”



Terry Zwiebel can tell you precisely where the structure is in Norfolk that caught fire last year as the result of a turkey fryer. The homeowner had stepped out of his garage only to come back in just a minute or two to find the building engulfed in flames. It can happen that quickly.

As City of Norfolk Fire Marshal, Zwiebel doesn't forget those sort of things. That's why he's reminding people this year to remember a few safety tips when using a turkey fryer or any hot cooking utensils especially during one of the worst times of the year for home fires – Thanksgiving Day.

“The first thing is to stay in the area where you have food cooking at high temperatures. Watch what you're cooking and stay alert as to the cooking conditions,” Zwiebel said.

Turkey fryers need special attention as they contain a gallon or more of hot cooking oil that can catch on fire if allowed to get too high of temperature. He recommends watching a thermometer carefully, keeping it at about 350 degrees. The temperature can be decreased by adjusting the amount of propane going to the burner. If the oil starts to smoke, it is too hot and needs to be turned down.

Zwiebel said the turkey should be completely thawed with no water in it when it's put in the water.

“The water hitting that hot oil can cause an immediate fire ball especially if you put in a frozen turkey. Even a partially frozen turkey will cause cooking oil to splatter when put in the fryer. Before you even add the oil to the fryer, fill it with water to the recommended level and put in the turkey to make sure how much space the turkey will take. That way you aren't surprised when you go to put the turkey in the hot oil and the oil overflows because the turkey is bigger than expected,” Zwiebel said. He added that the thawed turkey needs to be put in the oil very slowly.

“Keep your propane tank and hose in good shape. Turn it off if you smell propane. Keep children and pets away when using a turkey fryer as these appliances are extremely hot and can easily tip over,” Zwiebel said. The turkey fryer needs to be placed on a concrete surface, not on a flammable deck or in a closed garage area.

For more Thanksgiving cooking safety tips, go to [www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/cooking.html](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/cooking.html)