



# MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Thanksgiving Tips from Knox County**

### *Safety tips on preparing turkey and where to dispose of used cooking oil*

*Knoxville, Tenn.* — With only a week until Thanksgiving, here are some safety tips from the Knox County Health Department and the Knox County Fire Prevention Bureau, as well as information on proper food waste disposal from the Knox County Solid Waste Department:

#### **Safe Cooking**

- Clean and Separate:
  - Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before and after handling food.
  - Wash vegetables thoroughly and clean food-contact surfaces after preparing each food item and before beginning the next item.
  - Use separate cutting boards for meats, seafood and other foods that will be cooked, as well as ready-to-eat foods such as raw fruits and vegetables.
  - Do not rinse raw meat or poultry before cooking; it can spread bacteria.
  - Do not put cooked meat back into a container that previously held raw meat.
- Cooking:
  - Use a food thermometer to ensure meat has reached a safe internal temperature.
  - To check a turkey for doneness, insert a food thermometer into the inner thigh area near the breast, but not touching the bone.
  - The turkey is done when the temperature reads 165 degrees. Stuffing inside the bird should also be 165 degrees.
- Storage and Leftovers:
  - Use the two-hour rule: refrigerate leftovers within two hours of serving.
  - Your refrigerator should be set no higher than 40 degrees and the freezer at 0 degrees.
  - Hot casseroles and gravies can make your refrigerator struggle to keep the correct temperature. Use an appliance thermometer to check for proper cooling.
  - Never defrost food at room temperature. A 20-pound frozen turkey needs two to three days in the refrigerator to thaw completely, so plan accordingly. Cold running water and the microwave may also be used to thaw food, but food defrosted in this manner should be cooked immediately.
- More food safety tips at [http://www.knoxcounty.org/health/food\\_safety.php](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health/food_safety.php)

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## Fire Safety

- Never leave any cooking appliance unattended, especially turkey fryers.
- Because they can catch fire, avoid wearing loose or baggy clothing when cooking. And remember: stop, drop and roll.
- Keep a large lid near the cooking area to cover and smother any stovetop cooking fires.
- Turkey fryers:
  - Read the manufacturer's instructions thoroughly before using the fryer.
  - Use proper oil quantity and thawing methods prior to cooking.
  - NEVER use your fryer inside your home, garage or on a balcony or patio.
  - Turkey fryers should be set up at least 20 feet away from your home or any combustible material. This also goes for gas and charcoal/wood burning grills.
  - If you are cooking using charcoal or wood, make sure you are disposing of the burnt charcoal in a metal trash can at least 10 feet from your home and that it is covered by a lid.
  - Do not place burnt coals in plastic or cardboard receptacles, and never keep them inside your home or garage.
  - Coals can smolder and retain heat for days, which could start a fire.
- More fire safety tips at <http://www.facebook.com/KCFPB> and <http://knoxcounty.org/fire/>

## Waste Disposal

- Never pour oil or grease down the drain. This can cause costly problems for your home's plumbing and municipal sewers.
- Recycle used vegetable oil:
  - Used vegetable oil can be taken for free to three Knox County Convenience Centers or the city's Household Hazardous Waste Facility:
    - *Dutchtown Convenience Center* – 10618 Dutchtown Rd.
    - *Halls Convenience Center* – 3608 Neal Dr.
    - *John Sevier Convenience Center* – 1810 John Sevier Hwy
    - *Household Hazardous Waste Facility* – 1033 Elm Street
  - Waste vegetable oil must be in a closed, non-glass container.
- To avoid rodents and other pests around your trash, consider taking Thanksgiving Day food waste to one of Knox County's eight Solid Waste Convenience Centers.
- Centers are closed Thanksgiving Day.
- More information, including hours and locations, at [http://knoxcounty.org/solid\\_waste](http://knoxcounty.org/solid_waste)

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