



*For Immediate Release*

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## **DESOTO STRESSES SAFETY FIRST THIS THANKSGIVING**

### **Prevent Fire & Food Borne Illness + Be COVID Safe Advocated**

DeSoto's Fire Rescue Chief Jerry Duffield and Chief Health Inspector Mamata Bhandari recently offered their advice for keeping Thanksgiving safe during the taping of DeSoto's weekly news and information program "DeSoto: In-Depth."

Chief Jerry Duffield, who is also the [North Region Director](#) for the Texas Fire Chiefs Association, pointed out that the main safety problem his department encounters on Thanksgiving stems from people who are distracted and doing a lot of cooking and multi-tasking to prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday.

"Most of the fires that we have in the kitchen are actually caused by distraction. People either forget something's on or they get distracted and start doing something else and the next thing you know, especially if you are cooking with grease or on the top of your stove, the next thing you know is that you've got a problem."

Duffield advises holiday chefs to stay attentive to what they are cooking, keep the distractions to a minimum, try to avoid cooking everything at one time, and keep a fire extinguisher close by, especially if you are planning to deep fry your turkey for Thanksgiving.

"The one thing I want to make sure if you're actually going to do a turkey that way, keep a fire extinguisher near you and just remember, if something does happen, if it does turn over or catch on fire do not use a garden hose and water on that fire. The only thing that you can really do is just get an extinguisher and put it out and if you don't have that, believe me, sometimes the best answer is

doing nothing except just getting away from it and hope it will burn itself out very quickly.”

With the North Texas weather getting downright chilly at time, Chief Duffield is aware that some people will turn to space heaters, and he says that is okay but they should first make sure that the heater they use is UL listed and away from anything that could ignite.

“Space heaters are okay to use while you’re awake, while you’re alert, and around them. They’re never to be used overnight while you are sleeping. If you’re going to leave the home or leave the area where they’re on. Turn them off,” said Duffield who noted that whether you’re cooking in the kitchen or warming up the living room, people need to be attentive to the task at hand to minimize their risks.

DeSoto Health Inspector Mamata Bhandari also joined in the conversation by talking turkey. She pointed out that fresh turkeys should be used within one or two days of purchase and that frozen turkeys must be properly thawed to be safe. Bhandari noted that the best way to defrost frozen turkeys is to keep them in the refrigerator so that they can thaw over a few days period. Using the microwave on a defrost setting is also a potential option. While some restaurants defrost their turkeys in their sinks with running water, Bhandari cautioned that even with a wrapped turkey the sinks of home users would need to be disinfected before they could continue using their sinks for any other purposes. We recommend visiting the USDA’s website for more specific advice on how to store a turkey: <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2016/11/18/how-safely-thaw-turkey> .

And because turkeys are large and don’t always cook evenly, Bhandari recommends getting good food thermometer “A food thermometer is so important in each household because a turkey is really big inside and when you cook you want to make sure that all of the parts of the turkey reaches 165° degrees.”

Our Thanksgiving safety discussion ran for more than 30 minutes and took place Thursday morning during the taping of the City of DeSoto’s weekly news and

information program DeSoto: In-Depth. You can find it on our Facebook Page at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/desototx/videos/299078352220424>

Finally, wishing you all a very happy and safe Thanksgiving.

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