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**Ventilation Requirements When
Cooking Food Outside of the
Main Dietary Kitchen**

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this information bulletin is for the Minnesota Department of Health (Department) to provide additional information to nursing homes regarding cooking food items anywhere outside of the main dietary kitchen, including the staff lounge and resident bedrooms. For purposes of this information bulletin, the “main dietary kitchen” is the nursing home’s kitchen that is equipped with commercial grade, National Sanitation Foundation International (NSFI) listed (or equivalent) food service equipment (refrigerator, freezer, range, etc.) and a range hood with an automatic fire extinguishment system.

This bulletin must be read in conjunction with other applicable state and federal requirements. The information is intended as guidance only. This bulletin does not answer all of the questions that may arise relative to cooking outside of the main dietary kitchen. Unless otherwise noted, the lists in this bulletin are not all inclusive. Please remember that cooking operations include other safety issues that are not addressed in this information bulletin, such as those addressed in Data Tag F371 and the safe use of a microwave.

BACKGROUND:

For the past approximately ten (10) years, the Department has been approving requests from nursing homes to install residential food service equipment (refrigerator, electric range, range hood, microwave, etc) in neighborhood kitchens. This waiver, applicable only to a bona fide “neighborhood”, has limitations regarding the number of residents who reside in the neighborhood and on the foods that can be prepared in the neighborhood kitchen. Based on information exchanged with nursing homes during surveys and several questions that have arisen over the past 2 – 3 years, the Department feels it appropriate to further address this issue.

Kitchens are one of the leading locations for fires. The production of food can involve heat and combustible materials, including the food item itself. A fire in a kitchen can spread very rapidly, depending on the combustible material(s) and accelerants available to the fire. In an effort to minimize the threat to fire safety while still providing residents

some choices in their breakfast foods, activities involving food preparation, and requests for food items not on the main menu, the Department is providing detailed guidance regarding the use of residential food service equipment to prepare foods for meals or activities.

COOKING OPERATIONS IN NEIGHBORHOOD KITCHENS

Cooking food outside of the main dietary kitchen to be used as part of a resident meal is limited to those kitchens that have an approved waiver for MN. Rule 4658.4305, subp. 1. This waiver permits the use of residential food service equipment to prepare certain foods for resident breakfasts. The waiver limits the size of the neighborhood served by this kitchen to 25 beds.

Cooking foods or food products that result in the production of grease laden vapors requires that the range be protected by a Type I range hood with a UL300 automatic fire extinguishment system. The current waiver indicates that meats that produce grease, such as bacon and sausage, must be cooked in the main dietary kitchen and transported to the neighborhood kitchen for service to the residents. It has now been determined that, in addition to cooking meat products, cooking with butter, cooking oil, lard, shortening, or a non-stick spray coating that contains oil, such as PAM®, may result in the production of grease laden vapors.

Although MN. Rule 4658.4305, subp. 1, precludes the use of residential grade small appliances, such as waffle makers, electric fry pans, electric griddles, and portable induction cook top from being used to prepare breakfast foods in any location other than in an approved neighborhood kitchen, the Department has determined that it is acceptable to use these small appliances to prepare certain breakfast food items for individual residents in larger settings. For example, preparing certain breakfast food items on a counter top in a dining room serving more than 25 residents is acceptable with specific limitations (refer to the paragraph below that details cooking operations that do not require a range hood with a UL300 automatic fire extinguishment system).

PREPARATION OF FOOD ITEMS OTHER THAN BREAKFAST FOOD ITEMS

The electric range in a neighborhood, activity, serving, or occupational therapy kitchen may be used to bake desserts for service to residents as a snack or a dessert for their meal(s). Again, use of any food or food product that results in the production of grease laden vapors as the dessert is cooked is not permitted without required hood fire protection. Baking desserts in a residential grade electric range or oven located outside of the main dietary kitchen does not require a waiver for a neighborhood kitchen.

The electric range in a neighborhood, activity, serving, or occupational therapy kitchen may be used to heat up canned food items, such as soup, chili, and stew provided that the food item is prepared upon request for an individual resident.

A hot air popcorn popper may be used to pop popcorn provided that butter, cooking oil, lard, shortening, or a non-stick spray coating that contains oil, such as PAM®, is not used in popping the popcorn.

A residential grade microwave oven may be used to warm up pre-cooked food or food dishes, such as a sandwich, pizza, soup, single-serving prepared entrees designed for microwaving, single-serving leftovers, or coffee, tea, or hot beverage. It may also be used to pop microwave popcorn. It may not be used to cook raw meats, such as hamburger, chicken, or bacon. Warming food in a residential grade microwave oven located outside of the main dietary kitchen does not require a waiver for a neighborhood kitchen.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A RANGE HOOD WITH UL300 AUTOMATIC FIRE EXTINGUISHMENT SYSTEM

Examples of cooking operations that require installation of a range hood with a UL300 automatic fire extinguishment system include, but are not limited to:

1. Frying eggs using a non-stick spray coating that contains oil, such as PAM®,
2. Frying a grilled cheese sandwich (butter spread on bread slices),
3. Frying any raw meat,
4. Frying vegetables in a pan (stir fry) using butter or a non-stick spray coating that contains oil, such as PAM®, and
5. Warming precooked meats (e.g. bacon, sausage, sausage patties, etc.).

Examples of cooking operations that do not require installation of a range hood with a UL300 automatic fire extinguishment system are **limited to the following**:

1. Frying eggs using a pan with a non-stick surface,
2. Cooking scrambled eggs using a pan with a non-stick surface,
3. Cooking waffles in a waffle iron,
4. Cooking pancakes,
5. Cooking French toast,
6. Hard boiling an egg, and
7. Cooking a poached egg

These seven operations are acceptable provided that no non-stick lubricant, such as butter, cooking oil, or a non-stick spray coating that contains oil, such as PAM®, is used. In addition, baking desserts and warming an individual food item (as detailed above) are included in this category.

It is strongly recommended that locations used for cooking operations outside of the main dietary kitchens (e.g. neighborhood kitchens, dining rooms, and staff lounges) be equipped with appropriately classed fire extinguisher(s). In addition, it is recommended that all staff involved in these cooking operations be trained in the proper use of these fire extinguishers.

For questions about this page, please contact our Division of Compliance Monitoring Program: health.fpc-web@state.mn.us.