

Catholic Mutual...CARES

Fish Fry Best Practices

A Fish Fry can benefit the parish by creating additional revenue to support the mission of the parish. However, these events create additional liability exposure and fire potential. The following best practices have been developed to reduce your chance of loss during a fish fry event.

- An emergency response plan should be in place on how to respond to a fire or injury. Any employee or volunteer involved with the event should be trained on how to respond, including how to use a fire extinguisher.
- When frying indoors, please ensure there is proper ventilation with an exhaust hood and a fire suppression system. According to NFPA 96 (National Fire Protection Agency), an overhead fire suppression system and a proper exhaust hood is required when utilizing deep-fat fryers inside any structure. It is not required however, for open/outdoor frying. Propane tanks are NEVER allowed to be used indoors.
- When frying outdoors, please ensure there is adequate clearance from other buildings to reduce the potential for fire spread in the event of a fire. Furthermore, have a minimum of one "Class K" fire extinguisher per fryer opposite the area of the fryers. Temporary structures cannot be constructed of combustible materials such as tarps, etc. One area may be enclosed with a non-combustible material for a wind break and a non-combustible material for the roof. If unsure, always contact your local fire jurisdiction for guidance. The cooking area should be secured so that an unauthorized person does not have access to the fryers during operation.
- **In the event of a grease fire, never use water to put out the fire.** Using water can cause flaming oil to splatter and spread. Utilizing a "Class K" fire extinguisher or covering the fryer with a metal lid are the best ways to put out a grease fire. As such, water is a very dangerous liquid when deep-frying. When water encounters hot oil (about 350 °F), water vaporizes instantaneously turning into super-heated steam which can cause severe burns. It also expands quickly, which can cause oil to splatter and risk injury. Do not let water get into the hot oil or use water to cool, or clean the appliances while food is frying. Call 911 immediately if a grease fire occurs.

Cooking oil is a highly flammable liquid and can reach temperatures of over 400 °F. When cooking at this temperature, safety measures should be taken to prevent burns and fires. To prevent flare-ups and fires, avoid letting oil contact any flames. Because of this hazard, an adequate number of "Class K" fire extinguishers should be available.

- All oils have a "smoke point" at a specific temperature. At the "smoke point," the oil begins to break down and can have a foul odor or taste. The following oils have a high "smoke point" and are recommended to use for deep frying: peanut, canola, corn, grape seed, safflower, sunflower, and vegetable. Each kind of oil has a unique taste and nutrient makeup but all are safe to use for deep-frying. *(Although peanut oil is a healthy alternative to other oils, due to the potential of severe allergic reactions, should you choose to cook with peanut oil, we recommend that you post that information for all consumers to see.*

- After frying, if the oil is clouded, starts to foam, or has a foul odor, taste, or smell, it should be discarded. The safest way to dispose of oil is by pouring it into a sealable metal container (i.e. coffee can) and then throwing the oil-filled container in the trash. Used cooking oil can also be recycled in some areas. If there is a recycle drop-off point in your area, check it to see if they will accept your oil so it could be used to make biodiesel fuel or soap.
- Do not pour the oil down into a sink. Oil will cool and congeal causing backups in your sink, septic system, or public sewer system.
- Have an emergency first aid kit readily available and easily accessible at all times. The first aid kit should have ample supplies for burns. Know the do's and don'ts for treating burns. Persons doing the frying should wear protective clothing such as aprons and long sleeves to prevent burns from grease splatters. Volunteers should be trained on how to respond to an emergency and have some knowledge of cooking, first aid, extinguishing a fire and locating where the emergency shut-off is for the gas in the event of an emergency. Call 911 immediately if a person sustains a severe burn. If you are not certain the burn is severe, call 911 regardless and let EMS make that determination.
- Steps should be taken to reduce the potential for slip and fall hazards. When fryers are in use, they can splatter grease onto the floor creating a slick surface. Please ensure you have appropriate rubber backed mats in place around the cooking area to avoid slips. Use caution with these mats so as not to generate a trip hazard around the fryers.
- Hands must be washed before handling food. Care should also be taken to properly clean countertops, cutting boards and utensils to reduce foodborne illness. Two of the more common types of food poisoning are caused from salmonella and E. Coli bacteria. *Salmonella*, a bacteria that commonly causes foodborne illnesses, results in more hospitalizations and deaths than any other bacteria found in food. At least 1.4 million salmonella infections are reported annually in the United States. Any raw food of animal origin (i.e. meat, poultry, eggs, raw milk, fish, and shellfish) may carry salmonella. Food can be contaminated with E. Coli when a food handler or cook does not follow good sanitary procedures.
- Appropriate age groups are required for volunteers who are serving and/or cleaning. When using individuals under the age of 18, it is recommended you follow Federal Labor Laws when assigning tasks to these minors. Adult supervision is always a must when youth volunteers are assisting. A very useful Volunteer Coordinator Manual can be accessed on our website: www.catholicmutual.org - Risk Management – Personnel - "*Volunteer Activities*"
- Many fish fries are sponsored by outside groups such as the Knights of Columbus. When outside organizations/groups such as the Knights use your facility for a fish fry, they must provide you with a *Certificate of Insurance* which names both your parish and your Arch/Diocese as additional insured's. If this group is unable to provide a certificate of insurance, then they are required to purchase *Third Party Special Events Coverage*.

These are minimum guidelines to be used in the operation of your Fish Fry. Your local fire marshal or fire authority may be more restrictive in their requirements.

Please follow whichever guidelines are the most stringent.