

# Halifax press release

## Britains big food fright

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*As many people try to copy the culinary delights cooked up by their favorite TV chefs, Halifax Home Insurance urges homeowners to take care in the kitchen.*

- More than 84 kitchen fires per day - 88% of which are caused by appliance misuse
- One kitchen fire every 17 minutes
- Kitchen fires cost Britons a massive £280 million a year
- Scottish regions dominate kitchen fire top ten

Halifax Home Insurance is urging householders to exercise caution in the kitchen as the craze for copying TV chefs continues apace.

### Kitchen Nightmares

Around 30,500 fires originate in the kitchen each year – more than eighty per day or one every 17 minutes<sup>1</sup>. Kitchen fires account for around 64%<sup>2</sup> of the total annual amount of accidental domestic blazes. And data from the insurer estimates that avoidable kitchen fires cost Britons a massive £280 million<sup>3</sup> to rectify annually, with the average fire causing £9,264 worth of damage<sup>4</sup>.

Halifax warns that with 88%<sup>5</sup> of all kitchen fires being caused by carelessness with cooking appliances such as deep fat fryers, novice cooks are urged to take caution if planning to copy TV chefs.

### Regional breakdown

Incredibly, the insurer's data<sup>6</sup> shows that out of the top ten most likely places in the UK to experience a kitchen fire - seven are to be found in Scotland. Indeed The Highlands and Islands rank top followed by Dundee & Perth (2nd), South West Scotland (3rd), with Stirling/Falkirk/Grangemouth (4th) and Glasgow 5<sup>th</sup> making up the top five.

Blackburn (6<sup>th</sup>) is the English city with the highest ratio of kitchen fires per household, Ayr/Kilmarnock/Irvine were next (7th), while Aberdeen (9th) split the other two English towns in the top ten of Preston (8th) and Chester (10th).

**Table One: Top ten UK areas experiencing highest ratio of kitchen fires to householders over past five years**

Rank	Area
1	Highlands & Islands
2	Dundee & Perth
3	South West Scotland
4	Stirling, Falkirk & Grangemouth
5	Glasgow
6	Blackburn
7	Ayr, Kilmarnock & Irvine
8	Preston

9	Aberdeen
10	Chester

Source: Halifax Home Insurance 2008

David Rochester, Head of Underwriting at Halifax Home Insurance, said: "It's great to see TV stars getting the nation excited about cooking, but we are urging people who do take it up as a hobby to take extra care in the kitchen."

### **Kitchen Fire safety<sup>7</sup>**

#### **How to cook safely**

- Never leave children in the kitchen alone when cooking on the hob. Keep matches and sauce panhandles out of their reach to keep them safe.
- Take extra care if you need to leave the kitchen whilst cooking, take pans off the heat or turn them down to avoid risk.
- Avoid distractions when cooking.
- Make sure saucepan handles don't stick out – so they don't get knocked off the stove.
- Don't wear loose clothing when cooking – it can easily catch fire.
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob.
- Spark devices are safer than matches or lighters to light gas cookers, because they don't have a naked flame.
- Double check the cooker is off when you've finished cooking.
- Keep a fire extinguisher and fire blanket at hand and read the instructions.

#### **Take care with electrics**

- Keep electrics (leads and appliances) away from water.
- Check toasters are clean and placed away from curtains and kitchen rolls.
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean and in good working order. A build up of fat and grease can ignite a fire.
- Don't put anything metal in the microwave.

#### **Deep fat frying**

- Take care when cooking with hot oil – it sets alight easily.
- Make sure food is dry before putting it in hot oil so it doesn't splash.
- If the oil starts to smoke – it's too hot. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool.
- Use a thermostat controlled electric deep fat fryer.

**Ends.**

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**Editors' Notes**

1. Latest United Kingdom Fire Statistics from Department for Communities and Local Government
2. Latest United Kingdom Fire Statistics from Department for Communities and Local Government
3. Halifax Home Insurance fire claims data 2002-2007
4. Halifax Home Insurance fire claims data 2002-2007
5. Latest United Kingdom Fire Statistics from Department for Communities and Local Government
6. Halifax Home Insurance fire claims data 2002-2007
7. Fire Safety in The Home Department for Communities and Local Government 2007