How do you code unattended indoor cooking fires?

We're talking about indoor cooking fires, the leading cause of fire-related injuries and one of the leading causes of all residential fires.

Cooking fires that do not extend beyond the non-combustible container being used and do not damage the container should be coded as Incident Type 113 – Cooking fire confined to container. When the fire extends beyond the container or damages the container the incident type becomes a 111-Building fire.

There is a common error when cooking fires involve equipment. For example, when food catches fire in a microwave it is often coded as a confined cooking fire. The correct coding is incident Type 111- Building fire. The microwave would be identified as the equipment involved in ignition.

The thing to remember is that in order to be a confined cooking fire, the fire must occur in a non-combustible container that is not a powered piece of equipment and must not extend or cause damage to the container.

You may wonder what difference it makes how these fires are reported. *Isn't it enough that they were reported?* The difference is the decisions that get made from the local to the federal level. Good decisions can only be made with good data. Whether it's a cooking fire or other type of incident, entering data inconsistent with reporting standards creates bad data.

The National Fire Incident Reporting System rules and standards are designed in such a way that when powered equipment is involved in ignition, information about the equipment is collected. Capturing this information is critical to organizations such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The information may be used to issue product recalls.

Protecting citizens from harm is something the fire service aims to do when it comes to fire. In addition to education campaigns about the dangers of unattended cooking, the fire service also protects people by properly reporting cooking fires. The information reported is used to develop safer products, better fire codes, and targeted education programs. For these to be positive impacts, good data is needed.

Last year in New Hampshire there were 467 fires reported as starting in residential kitchens, 4 injuries, and more than $71,805 in property damage. This information alone demonstrates the seriousness of these fires and the need to accurately capture data in order to reduce the amount of harm and damage they cause.