Howard County
Health Department

# Cooking When the Power Goes Off

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reminds residents that cooking meals after a storm has knocked out electricity or gas lines can be a problem and may be hazardous. Follow these basic rules:

- Charcoal or gas grills are the most obvious alternative sources of heat for cooking. **NEVER USE THEM INDOORS**. In doing so you risk both asphyxiation from carbon monoxide and starting a fire that could destroy your home.
- Camp stoves that use gasoline or solid fuel should always be used outdoors.
- Small electrical appliances can be used to prepare meals if you have access to an electrical generator.
- Wood can be used for cooking in many situations. You can cook in a fireplace if the chimney is sound. Don't start a fire in a fireplace that has a broken chimney. Be sure the damper is open.
- If you're cooking on a wood stove, make sure the stove pipe has not been damaged.
- If you have to build a fire outside, build it away from buildings, never in a carport. Sparks can easily get into the ceiling and start a house fire.
- Never use gasoline to get a wood or charcoal fire started.
- Make sure any fire is well-contained. A metal drum or stones around the fire bed are necessary precautions. A charcoal grill is a good place in which to build a wood fire. Be sure to put out any fire when you are through with it.
- When cooking is not possible, many canned foods can be eaten cold.

*The above information is derived from facts developed by Clemson Cooperative Extension.*