



Safety Note

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



Safety Note #58

SAFE MICROWAVE OVEN USE



*Photograph Courtesy of
REC Administrative Office*

Consumer Product Safety Commission data indicate a total of approximately 7,800 people were treated in hospitals for microwave oven injuries during 2003. Of this total, about 40% of the injuries were burns due to spilled hot beverages or food.

California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8, Section 3203 (7) requires employees be trained on the equipment they use in the workplace.

Pre-Use Activities

- Thoroughly review and understand information provided in the microwave oven operator's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect the microwave oven for damage or disrepair including examining the electrical cord and plug for defects. In addition, assure the oven door closes properly.
- If a microwave oven fails the pre-use inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the equipment from service by attaching a red tag that states "DO NOT USE." Complete red tag with appropriate information.

Operating Precautions

- Do not overcook food or beverages. Follow recommended times given in microwave oven cooking instructions.
- Do not operate a microwave oven without food inside for more than one to two minutes.
- Never place metal objects in a microwave oven. Remove wire twist-ties or metal meat pins or staples.
- If arcing occurs inside a microwave oven, promptly turn the oven off. When feasible remove metal or metal-containing object from the oven.
- Only use microwave-safe cookware in a microwave oven. Use care when opening cooking containers to prevent burns from steam.
- Always allow food or beverage containers to vent while being heated in a microwave oven. Create vent spaces by cracking container covers or poking holes in plastic wrap.
- Never use recycled paper products in a microwave oven. Recycled paper towels or napkins may contain metal flakes which can cause arcing and paper combustion.
- Before cooking, always pierce foods with unbroken skins (i.e., potatoes, hot dogs, apples, egg yolks, etc.) to allow steam to vent and prevent food from bursting.
- Never boil eggs in a microwave oven. The heat-induced pressure increase in the yolk can burst the egg.
- In the event of a microwave oven fire, keep the oven door closed and disconnect the power source.
- After using a microwave oven, clean up any oven spills with a damp cloth or sponge.