



## appliance doctor

# For a safe holiday, check the stove



JOE GAGNON

This past Thanksgiving has been no different than all the others I have been through in the past 17 years of owning my business. Parts sales of stove parts were brisk and so were the number of people who needed service on that very

day. There were several panic situations where the homeowner had to take the turkey to an in-law or neighbor to finish cooking. Much of this could have been prevented if certain steps would have been taken beforehand, and try not to forget that Christmas cooking is around the corner.

It was not so many weeks ago that many of us were cooking on the outdoor barbecue and had little use for the kitchen range except to heat something

on the top burners. Using the oven portion of the range was not necessary until this past turkey day and only when we placed it inside the oven did we think about, "I hope it works."

**Electric ranges:** Check each burner on top by setting the different controls to low, medium and high. Make sure they operate properly on each setting and if your burners are pull out types, check to see if the burner ends are corroded. Any time a consumer has a burner where the ends are not shiny and free of pit marks, they should replace the burner block as well as the burner itself. Purchase a hanging oven thermometer from your local grocery store and check out the oven temperature. Set it for 300 degrees and see how much it is off. You can make adjustment for cooking by setting it a little higher or lower by knowing how many degrees it varies from the knob setting.

Top burners and over elements

should be wiped cleaned once in a while with a perfectly clean dish cloth. Spill over foods which contain an acid base will cause pitting in a burner or element which will eventually lead to an explosion of the part.

I once met a woman who had a big burn mark on her eyebrow which was caused by a top burner blowing up. If this should ever happen to you, step back away from the range and pay attention to where the hot pieces of molten metal are flying. Make sure they don't set the house on fire.

**Gas ranges:** They do not have pilot flames like the model of yesteryear. They have an ignitor which is so fragile that it can break by closing the oven door too hard. So many times I hear from a consumer who has moved the range to lay new floorings or paint the wall, and it fails to ignite and you see the ignitor glowing bright red, do not assume the oven safety valve to be the

defective part. In 99 percent of cases, it is the ignitor itself which causes the problem. It provides its own milliamperes to the safety valve and if it doesn't provide enough of them to the valve, the valve will not let gas flow through it.

The majority of top burner problems have to do with a dirt condition. Top burner ignitors can be greatly affected by improper voltage, or wall outlets which have not been grounded properly or have incorrect polarity. The hardware stores sell an inexpensive gadget for the homeowner to check these things. Good luck with the holiday cooking this year.

*Joe Gagnon, the Appliance Doctor, will answer your questions about maintaining and repairing large appliances. Gagnon is president of Carmack Appliances in Garden City and does a weekly radio program on WJR-AM. He is author of "First Aid from the Appliance Doctor," available at area bookstores.*

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