



Prevent Think Life Safety

For additional information, call 503-805-8482

Outdoor Cooking Safety

Outdoor cooking is a big part of many people's summertime fun. Safe practices with barbecues and campfires can keep it fun and avoid dangerous problems.

Barbecues get hot. So they need space. Give them at least 3 feet in every direction and keep them out from under overhangs that flames might be able to reach. Campfires are much the same. A safe area should be prepared that keeps the fire contained and allows for heat, sparks, and smoke to be safe and not catch fire to the surroundings.

Sometimes, barbecues are not allowed, like on balconies of apartments or condos. Check with your management if you live in these kinds of buildings. Also, a well ventilated area is an important safety consideration for any kind of cooking/burning. Carbon monoxide, a poisonous and flammable gas given off by all burning, can collect and make people ill or otherwise harm them.

Consider these safety tips for the barbecue you have:

Charcoal Grills

- Lighter fluid is the only type of flammable liquid that should be used to light charcoal (gasoline is extremely dangerous). Use it carefully since it can cause fire to spread outside the grill. The invisible vapors (that you can smell) are what's most dangerous.
- Store lighter fluid well away from the barbecue. Do not apply more fluid once the fire has started.
- Keep your grill clean. Grease buildup can cause fire to grow larger than the barbecue can contain. Keep it clean and empty grease pans if you have them.
- Allow the charcoal to cool for up to 48 hours before emptying them from the barbecue. Even then, check to be sure that they have cooled. Ashes have been known to start fires more than a day after they were used. Use metal containers for disposal and do not place in the trash until cool to the touch.
- High winds can spread sparks from a charcoal barbecue. Always be watchful of the weather.

Propane/Natural Gas Grills

- Check all gas connections for tightness before each use.
- Be prepared to ignite the burners when they are turned on. Dangerous gas buildup can occur if the valves are opened too soon before touching the ignition flame to the burner.

- If the grill doesn't light right away, turn off the valves and allow the gas to clear before starting again.
- Be sure burners and tank valves are turned off when not in use.

Campfires

- Campfires may not be allowed anywhere in your community. Special permits may be needed for certain cases when weather and other conditions exist. Contact your Fire Marshal's Office for information.
- Clear the ground where the fire will be located of any leaves, sticks, and needles. These can allow the fire to travel (even underground by following roots) to things that can burn.
- Clear a perimeter around the fire, three feet or more of non-combustible surface.
- Choose a place clear of overhead trees and branches so rising heat and smoke won't ignite them. Keep a distance of 10 feet or more.
- Surround the fire with rocks to keep burning pieces of wood from rolling out of the fire pit.
- Keep a hose or bucket of water on hand, ready to use if the fire does escape the fire pit.
- Soak and stir the fire pit to put the fire out. If you can touch the ashes with your hand, it is cool enough to leave.