

OUTDOOR GRILLING SAFEGUARDS

BACKGROUND

Liquid petroleum (LP) gas or propane used in gas grills or fire pits is extremely flammable. Each year more than 500 fires occur when people use gas grills and about 20 people are injured as a result of gas grill/fire pit fires and explosions. Many of these fires and explosions occur when consumers first use a grill that has been left idle for a period of time or just after refilling and reattaching the grill/fire pit gas container. The use of gas-fired, fire pit, and charcoal grills within residential cluster communities represents a significant property exposure.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The following are options that provide grilling in a fun but safe way:

Option 1: All propane gas grills, natural gas grills, charcoal grills, hibachis, smokers, or any appliance which uses an open flame to cook should be kept at least 10 ft. vertically and horizontally from all buildings and other combustible materials (pine straw, pine bark, and other combustible landscaping materials).

Option 2: A "community" stationary grilling pit (consisting of grills similar to the one shown to the right) should be considered as a replacement for all personal grills within the condominium or residential communities. The fixed grilling pits must be at least 15 ft. from all buildings and must be properly maintained and cleaned in accordance with the community's restrictions.

Option 3: A "community" wood or natural gas fire pits (see example in fig 2) should be considered as a replacement for all personal fire pits within all condominium and residential community. The fixed fire pits must be at least 15 ft. from all buildings and must be properly maintained and cleaned in accordance with the community's restrictions.

CHARCOAL GRILL SAFETY TIPS

- Instant lighting briquette - spread them in a single layer so they touch at the edges. Don't apply lighter fluid, light several briquettes at their edges
- Standard briquette - stack them into a pyramid. Light with fluid, electric, or chimney charcoal starters
- Electric starters - check to see that the cord's insulating cover is in good condition, make sure that the cord does not create a tripping hazard, and do not use it if it is raining or if the ground is wet



Fig. 1 Example of a stationary grill for community grill pit

- Lighter fluid - apply and let soak in for at least a minute before lighting. Never apply lighter fluid to lit coals. Use charcoal lighter fluids, never use gasoline!
- Time to cook - Coals are ready when they appear ash gray in daylight or glowing red at night
- Ensure coals are extinguished prior to disposal.

GAS GRILL SAFETY TIPS

- A working and properly maintained fire extinguisher should be provided/available in the grilling area
- Check the tubes that lead to the burner for any blockage from insects, spiders, or food grease. Use a pipe cleaner or wire to clear blockage and push it through to the main part of the burner

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

[CPSC Release dated July 1, 1999](#)

[CPSC Release dated May 25, 2011](#)

[Grilling Safety - NFPA](#)

[Cooking Fire Safety - USFA](#)

- Check grill hoses for cracking, brittleness, holes, and leaks. Make sure there are no sharp bends in the hose or tubing
- Move gas hoses as far away as possible from hot surfaces and dripping hot grease. If you can't move the hoses, install a heat shield to protect them
- Replace scratched or nicked connectors, which can eventually leak gas
- If you detect a gas leak, immediately turn off the gas at the tank and don't attempt to light the grill until the leak is fixed
- Keep lighted cigarettes, matches, or open flames away from a leaking grill
- Never use a grill indoors. Use the grill at least 10 feet away from any building. Do not use the grill in a garage, carport, porch, or under a surface that can catch fire
- When lighting the grill, keep the top open. If the grill does not light in the first several attempts, wait five minutes to allow gas to dissipate
- Never attempt to repair the tank valve or the appliance yourself. See an LP gas dealer or a qualified appliance repair person
- Consumers should use caution when storing LP gas containers. Always keep containers upright. Never store a spare gas container under or near the grill. Never store a full container indoors. Never store or use flammable liquids, like gasoline, near the grill.
- To avoid incidents while transporting LP gas containers, consumers should transport the container in a secure, upright position. Never keep a filled container in a hot car or car trunk. Heat will cause the gas pressure to increase, causing the relief valve to open and allowing gas to escape

FIRE PIT SAFETY TIPS

- A working and properly maintained fire extinguisher should be provided/available in the grilling area
- Before lighting the fire, check the direction of the wind
- You should avoid wearing loose fitting clothing around the fire in addition to flammable clothing such as nylon
- Soft woods such as cedar and pine have a tendency to throw sparks and pop. Avoiding these woods can cut down on the risk of injury and the spread of fire
- It is also important to know how to properly extinguish your fire as well as how to safely dispose of ashes



Fig. 2 Example of a stationary grill for community fire pit



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