

## **Don't Let a Fire Ruin Your Summer Fun**

Ah, there it is — the unmistakable aroma of hot dogs, hamburgers and lots of other yummy foods sizzling on the grill. Nothing says SUMMER IS HERE better than an estimated 92 million American grill-owning households cranking up their backyard barbecues for festive family gatherings, community celebrations or just a quiet dinner on the backyard patio.

Residential fires in America caused 14,700 injuries, 2,470 deaths and \$12.4 billion in damages in 2012. While statistically smaller by comparison, grill fires tallied 140 injuries, 10 deaths and \$96 million in property damage annually from 2007 to 2011, according to reports from the National Fire Protection Association.

Grills, hibachis and barbecues on residential properties continue to be a high fire risk, according to the United States Fire Administration, and the agency urges Americans to be especially mindful now during the grilling season. So take a second to review this list of precautions and prevent a grill or propane fire from ruining your summer fun:

### **Rules of Engagement**

- Start smart by following all manufacturer's instructions and warnings when assembling and/or operating your grill.
- Only grill outside in open areas – not in a garage; under eaves or other enclosures; or near siding, deck railings or anything flammable.
- Set up your grill away from playing fields, lawn games or any other high-traffic areas.

### **It's Show Time!**

- Keep the lid open when lighting a propane grill to prevent an explosion from gas buildup. Turn off and wait at least 10 minutes to relight if the burners blow out.
- Kids under five suffer 25-percent of all grill burns. Stay close to your grill when in use, and keep children clear with a three-foot "kid-free zone."
- Use long-handled tools to prevent burns, and tuck in loose clothing.
- Douse flare-ups with spritzes of water on a charcoal grill, but not on a gas grill. For a gas grill, turn the gas down or off.
- Have baking soda on hand to control a more serious grease fire, and know where a fire extinguisher is, just in case.
- When done cooking, shut off the gas supply, then turn the burners to "off."

### **Keeping It All Together**

- Mechanical failure is the leading cause of grill fires. So check your grill and propane tank regularly for wear, particularly for cracked hoses, broken fittings, dents and other corrosion.

- Remove grease or fat buildup from trays below the grill regularly.
- Rotten egg, skunk or dead animal smells can mean propane is leaking; turn off the supply valve if you can do so safely, tell everyone to leave the area and call the fire department.
- Transport propane cylinders securely and upright in a well-ventilated area of your vehicle, and never leave a bottle inside the car on a hot day.
- Never store propane indoors or in an enclosed area such as a basement, garage, shed or tent.

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*Nothing in this article should be construed as legal advice. You must consult with an attorney for the application of the law to your specific circumstances.*

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