

Outdoor Cooking Safety

A message from the Minooka Fire Protection District Fire Prevention Bureau

Though many people use their barbeque grills year-round, for many families, this is the start of barbeque season. In its continuous effort to ensure the safety of the community from the dangers of fire, the fire department would like to pass along these safety tips for a happy carefree outdoor cooking season.

Check Your Grill—Gas

Make sure your grill is stable and located on level ground. Tighten any loose screws that may affect your grill's stability. Check the tubes that lead to the burner for any blockage from insects, spiders or grease. Pay particular attention to the Venturi tube. Use a pipe cleaner or wire to clear the blockage. Check grills hoses for cracking or brittleness. Replace defective ones. Locate gas hoses as far away as possible from hot surfaces or spilling grease. Check for leaks using a soapy water solution. If you find a leak, turn off the cylinder and have your grill repaired. Inspect the burners. If they look good, fire-up the grill and check for an even flame. Many burners will only last one or two seasons and must be replaced on a regular basis. Clean out the grease and ash that accumulated on the bottom of the grill. Check for rust and deterioration.

Using Your Grill—Gas

Be familiar with the instructions provided by the manufacturer. Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. A garden hose could also be used. Maintain a minimum of five feet clearance from any combustibles. Ten feet is even better. Watch for overhanging obstructions as well. Keep children away while lighting the grill and while cooking. Watch the wind. Keep the wind at your back. Don't wear loose fitting clothing especially sleeves. Open the tank only about a quarter to half a turn. That's all the gas you need for cooking, and if something goes wrong, it's easier to shut off. Keep the cover open while lighting the grill. Keeping the cover shut will allow an explosive amount of gas to accumulate. Light the match and then turn on the burner flame. If the gas doesn't light right away, allow the gas to dissipate before trying to light the grill again. Stand away from the grill while lighting. Use long-handled tools. If there are small children around, be mindful of where you set down the matches or lighter after lighting the grill. Keep a spray bottle of water handy to cool down flare-ups. Never leave a grill unattended. When you are done cooking, make sure you shut off the propane tank as well.

Propane Tips

Check your propane tank for damage. Discard a damaged tank. Store propane tanks upright. Do not store propane indoors. Propane vapors are heavier than air and slow to dissipate. Do not store propane below grade or in confined areas. When transporting propane containers, keep the cylinder upright and secure. Never keep a cylinder in a hot car.

Check Your Grill—Charcoal

Make sure your grill is stable and located on level ground. Tighten any loose screws that may affect your grill's stability. Clean out the grease and ash that accumulated on the bottom of the grill. Check for rust and deterioration.

Using Your Grill—Charcoal

Be familiar with the instructions provided by the manufacturer. Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. A garden hose could also be used. Maintain a minimum of five feet clearance from any combustibles. Ten feet is even better. Watch for overhanging obstructions as well. Keep children away while lighting the grill and while cooking. Watch the wind. Keep the wind at your back. Don't wear loose fitting clothing especially sleeves. Use only approved charcoal lighting fluids. Better yet—use a metal chimney or electric fire starter. If you use an electric fire, be careful where you place it after removing it from the grill. Never use an electric starter in the rain. Make sure it's cool before putting it away. When using a lighting fluid, allow the fluid to soak into the charcoal. This allows flammable vapors to dissipate. Stand away from the grill while lighting. Use long-handled tools. Never add lighter fluid once the fire has started. If there are small children around, be mindful of where you set down the matches or lighter after lighting the grill. Keep a spray bottle of water handy to cool down flare-ups. Never leave a grill unattended. Charcoal requires oxygen. The vents should be open while you're cooking. Make sure the used coals are cooled before discarding. It could take as long as 48 hours for charcoal to cool completely. Discard used charcoal into a noncombustible container. A good way to make sure the coals are out is to use tongs and submerge each one in a pail of water.

In General

Select grills from a reputable manufacturer. Select grills that are listed by Underwriters Laboratories or other accredited testing agency. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Barbequing is an American way of life. What would the Fourth of July and the company picnic be without burgers and hot dogs on the grill? But each year in the United States, fire departments respond to over 6000 residential fires caused by barbeque grills. Some 20,000 people are injured and almost \$30 million in

property is destroyed. Take the time to check your grill, and practice good fire safety while cooking on it.

If there are any questions, please call the Minooka Fire Protection District Fire Prevention Bureau at 815.467.5637 ext 201.

Have a fire-safe summer!