



SUMMER GRILLING SAFETY TIPS

Fire in the grill under the burgers, hot dogs and luscious ribs is a welcome addition to our senses of sight and smell compared to the grey memories of winter; however, backyard-residence barbequing can make your summer kick-off memorable for all the wrong reasons. The International Fire Code, which has been adopted by many cities, including the City of Troy, Michigan, state the following:

Troy City Code Chapter 93, 308.3.1 Open Flame Cooking Devices. Charcoal Burners and other Open-Flame Cooking Devices Shall Not Be Operated on Combustible Balconies or Within 10 Feet (3048MM) of Combustible Construction.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. One-and Two-Family Dwellings.
2. Where Buildings, Balconies and Decks are Protected by an Automatic Sprinkler System.

The Troy Fire Prevention Division has written that the use of barbecues on apartment balconies presents a risk of fire to the apartment and creates a nuisance for the fire department. The letter was from Dave Roberts, Assistant Fire Chief/Fire Marshal.

“Barbecue fires have been known to get out of control and ignite a building’s overhang, outdoor furniture and other combustible decorative materials. The use of either charcoal lighter fluid or propane gas for barbecuing presents a fire and life safety hazard during cooking if not used properly. Improper disposal of hot ashes from charcoal presents a risk of fire and improper storage of propane tanks and lighter fluid also presents a risk of explosion”.

“Additionally, the fire department is often called for what are reported to be fires in apartments that turn out to be barbecues on balconies seen from a distance. These calls expose responding fire fighters and vehicles to unnecessary risk”.

“The Troy Fire Prevention Division, therefore, strongly discourages barbecuing on balconies. If barbecuing is to occur, it should be done on ground level in a designated location with adequate clearance to the building and in a manner which reduces the chance of fire spreading to the building or other nearby combustible materials. Fuel used for barbecuing should also be stored in a safe and approved manner”.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in the April 30th, 2009 article: from 2003-2006, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 7,900 home fires involving grills, hibachis or barbeques per year, causing 120 reported injuries and \$80 million in direct property damage. In 2007, 18,600 patients went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration the following Figures 1, 2 and 3 on grilling explain the need for Safety Measures for Grilling.

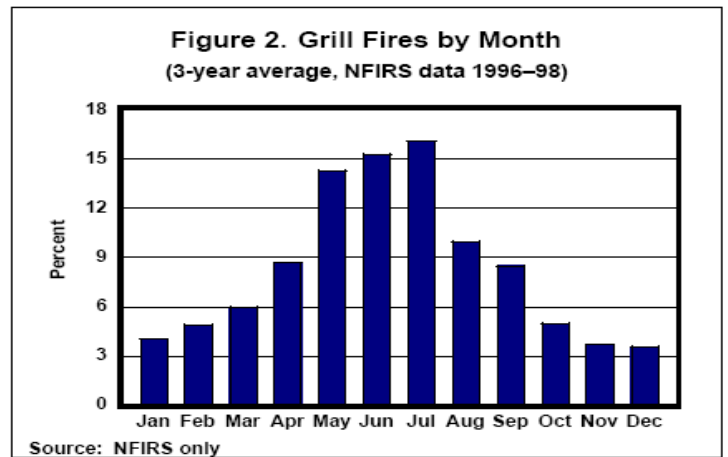
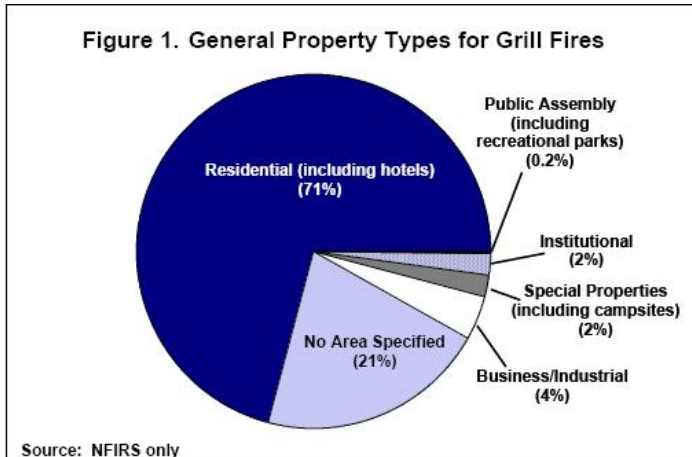


Figure 3. Area of Fire Origin for Residential Grill Fires
(3-year average, NFIRS data 1996–98)

AREA OF FIRE ORIGIN	PERCENT
Court, Terrace, Patio	29
Lawn Field, Open Area	27
Exterior Balcony, Open Porch	21
Garage, Carport, Vehicle Storage Area	5

Source: NFIRS only

On our SecurPLACE site visits, we have seen balcony apartments with grills stored outside. Sometimes we see the lower level walk out units with grills stored under the balcony of the unit above them. A check with various apartment managers revealed grilling or barbecuing is not allowed as per their tenant lease agreement. The same managers have said the equipment must be at least 10 feet away from the structure. What this means is grilling and barbecuing is occurring with minimal control by property management. If this is the case, the following rules should be reviewed and followed by each respective tenant.

Safety Measures for Grilling/Barbecuing

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors. If used indoors, or in any enclosed spaces, such as tents, they pose both a fire hazard and the risk of exposing occupants to toxic gases and potential asphyxiation.
- Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings and from under eaves and overhanging branches. You should position your grill a minimum of 10 feet away from all objects. Fire extinguishers should be available for each situation.
- Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas and foot traffic. Always remain at the grill during cooking. Do not wear loose clothing while cooking at the BBQ.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area: declare a three-foot “safe zone” around the grill. Supervise the area.
- Provide several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when flipping burgers or other food items.
- Periodically remove grease or fat buildup in trays below the grill so it cannot be ignited by a hot grill. Dispose of hot coals properly....douse them with plenty of water and stir to ensure the charcoal fire is completely out.
- Purchase the proper starter fluid (charcoal grills) and store the can out of reach of all children and away from your heat source. Have children turn in loose matches or lighters they may find on the property.
- Never add charcoal starter fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited and never use any flammable or combustible liquid other than charcoal starter fluid to get the fire going.
- Check the gas cylinder hose for leaks (propane grills) before using it for the first time each year. A light soap and water solution applied to the hose will quickly reveal escaping propane by releasing bubbles. If you determine your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubbles test and there is no flame, turn off the gas tank and grill. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.