

Now that summer is here, it's time we break out the grills and start enjoying cooking in the outdoors. Though this is a time for fun and entertaining, we have to remember there are some serious consequences to unsafe grilling and outdoor cooking practices.

The National Fire Protection Association Reports:

- In 2004-2008, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 7,700 home fires involving grills, hibachis or barbecues per year, including an average of 3,200 structure fires and 4,500 outside fires. These 7,700 fires caused an annual average of 13 civilian deaths (to the nearest ten), 120 civilian injuries and \$70 million in direct property damage.
- More than one-quarter (29%) of the home structure fires involving grills started on a courtyard, terrace or patio, 28% started on an exterior balcony or open porch, and 7% started in the kitchen.
- Flammable or combustible gas or liquid was the item first ignited in half of home outdoor grill fires. In 49% of the home outdoor fires in which grills were involved, 56% of the outside gas grills, and 39% of gas grill structure fires, the fire started when a flammable or combustible gas or liquid caught fire.

City Code 2-6-010 states that the city of Marietta has adopted the International Fire Code as a Marietta city ordinance:

Section 308.3.1 of the International Fire Code reads as follows:

Open flame cooking devices. Charcoal burners and other open flame cooking devices shall not be operated on balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Exceptions:

1. One and two-family dwellings.
2. Where buildings, balconies and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system.

Section 308.3.1.1 of the International Fire Code reads as follows:

Liquefied-petroleum-gas fueled cooking devices. LP-gas burners having an LP-gas container with a water capacity greater than 2.5 pounds (nominal 1 pound of LP-gas capacity) shall not be located on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Safety tips

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.

Charcoal grills

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
- Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.
- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

Propane grills

Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. A propane leak will release bubbles. If your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubble 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. If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.