**“Cooking with Gas:” Summer Outdoor Fire Safety**

*Preventing fires and injuries during the outdoor grilling season*

The scent of burgers sizzling on a grill is synonymous with summertime. When the days are too beautiful to stay inside, cookouts make for bright, fun afternoons with friends and family—with the grill at the center of all. But however fabulous grills seem when you’re digging into buttery corn and steaks, it’s important to remember that these backyard icons have a dangerous side.

According to the [National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) 2019 Research Fact Sheet,](https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/US-Fire-Problem/Home-Grill-Fires) approximately 19,000 patients go to the ER every year due to grill-related injuries, more than 9,000 of which are thermal burns from hot grill surfaces. Furthermore, on average 10,200 home fires are started by grills each year. The majority of these cases can be prevented. It’s incredibly important to keep certain safety measures in mind when cooking on the grill, from before you start cooking to after all the hot dogs are served.

**Before Grilling**

Just because the shish kabobs are prepped and ready to go doesn’t mean the grill is as well!

* Make sure you are not wearing any loose-fitting clothes. This prevents a stray sleeve or shirt tail from catching aflame.
* *Never* grill inside. Make sure the grill is away from any structures and in a well-ventilated, open space. Courtyards, balconies or porches are often not safe places to grill, as overhangs and railings create fire hazards. In fact, more than a quarter of grill fires start on a porch or exterior balcony.
* Keep pets and young children away from the cooking area, and make sure that the grill sits on a stable, flat surface.
* Eighty-five percent of the grills involved in home fires are gas grills. To be a responsible gas grill user, you must understand the precautions that need to be taken *before* firing up the grill. Check the connections between the propane tank and the fuel line to ensure that there aren’t leaks. A good way to check for leaks is to apply a solution of dish soap and water to the connection points and along the hose with a brush or spray bottle. Turn the gas on, and if there is a leak the soap will bubble. If you see large bubbles, turn off the gas and then go back and tighten the connections.
* The smell of gas or a flame that won’t light are signs of a leak as well.
* Keep a fire extinguisher or bucket of sand next to the grill in case of fire.
* For grease fires, don’t use water to put them out; use baking soda instead.

**During Grilling**

Once these initial checks are completed, it’s time to get cooking.

* Open the lid before turning on the grill. This prevents gas build-up and allows you to check that the grill is clean. Turn on the propane tanks *before* turning the knobs of the burner, and then, if applicable, push the ignition button.
* If the flame doesn’t ignite, turn off the grill and gas tank, and wait at least five minutes before re-lighting. This ensures that the gas dissipates.
* If you have a charcoal grill, use charcoal starter fluid—not other types of starter fluids—or a charcoal chimney starter that uses newspaper. Don’t add starter fluid to the fire if the flames begin to die.
* Remove excess marinade before cooking, and don’t overload your grill with food, especially meat. If too much fat drips onto the flames, it can cause a flare-up.
* If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department.
* Never leave a lit grill unattended. Fires double in size rapidly, so remember to have all your prep done before cooking begins.

**After Grilling**

Once you have cooked your veggies and seared your sirloins to perfection, it’s time to turn the grill off safely.

* For gas grills, turn off the gas tank first to prevent excess gas from leaking. Only then should you turn off the grill burners.
* If you are using charcoal, allow the coals to cool completely by covering them with water and mixing.
* Clean the grill to remove grease and fat buildup, which provide fuel for a fire. In more than a quarter of cases where grills catch fire, the grills have not been cleaned.
* Thoroughly clean the utensils as well, and store them inside the grill when you are not using them.

By following these safety measures, you can ensure that your cookouts are remembered for their good food and company rather than any preventable accidents.

***Want to Do More to Help? Volunteer!***

The name of department is currently participating in the North Carolina Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS) initiative, a program dedicated to increasing the number of volunteer firefighters throughout the state. More than 70% of all fire personnel in North Carolina are volunteers, and the majority of fire departments throughout the state are experiencing a volunteer shortage. Local fire departments need volunteers of all skill levels and abilities, people willing and able to respond to emergencies whenever called.

“The skills and experience gained as a volunteer firefighter are invaluable and have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of others,” says Chief Mosley, “Those who join their local fire departments are signing up for one of the most rewarding opportunities they’ll ever have.”

To volunteer at your local fire department, visit [www.volunteerfirenc.org](http://www.volunteerfirenc.org) or text “firefighter” to 88799 to be kept up to date about the program.

To discover ways that you or your organization can help the campaign to recruit volunteer firefighters, visit [www.weneedfirefighters.org](http://www.weneedfirefighters.org).