



Grilling Tips from the East Providence Fire Department & Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs



Don't let your BBQ plans go up in flames!

PROVIDENCE – *May 4, 2015* – The Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs (RIAFC) is urging Rhode Islanders to take precautions during the summer grilling season.

"For many households, the return of warm weather signals the beginning of the outdoor cooking season," said RIAFC President Michael Frink, fire chief of the Dunn's Corners Fire District. "Before people fire up the grill, we ask them to take a few moments to think about grilling safety. Doing this at the start of summer can go a long way toward limiting grill accidents."

According to Frink, a key concern with gas or charcoal grills is inappropriate placement: he explained that more than one-third of all gas and charcoal grill home fires begin on an exterior balcony or unenclosed porch.

U.S. fire departments respond to an average of 8,800 home fires involving grills, hibachis or barbecues per year, including an average of 3,800 structure fires and 5,000 outside fires. These 8,800 fires caused annual average of 10 civilian deaths, 140 reported injuries and \$96 million in direct property damage.

"We can't stress enough the importance of safety while grilling," said Frink. "It's easy to become preoccupied while grilling as we visit with family and friends but just that few seconds of neglect can lead to a serious fire."

Frink provided the following safety tips for reference when grilling:

Make Fire Safety a Priority

- 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.

Also, said Frink, gas grills should be thoroughly inspected before using for the first time each year. Check for propane cylinder hose leaks by using a light soap and water solution applied to the hose as it will quickly reveal escaping propane by releasing bubbles.

If you find bubbles (or if there is an odor and no flame) immediately turn off the propane tank and grill. If the leak stops after taking this step, get the grill professionally serviced. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department. Also, if you smell gas while cooking, immediately step away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not attempt to move the grill.

"I encourage people to share these tips with family and friends and speak up if they see someone grilling unsafely," said Frink. "We can significantly reduce the risk of serious and potentially fatal grilling injuries, but we need the public's help."

For more grilling safety tips, visit the National Fire Protection Association's web site at www.nfpa.org

The Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs is a professional organization dedicated to improving efficiency, preparedness and emergency response time, to educating the public about fire safety and to providing a support system for Rhode Island fire chiefs, firefighters and emergency medical technicians in times of crisis.