

# Wrightsville Beach Fire Department Press Release



From: Frank Smith, Fire Chief

Date: 3/14/2012

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## Barbeque Grill Safety

As the warm spring weather arrives in Wrightsville Beach, many of us will celebrate by firing up the barbecue grill. Americans enjoy more than three billion barbecues each year. Barbequing is a great way to enjoy the outdoors with family and friends, but careless barbecuing can be dangerous or even deadly.

This picture shows a Wrightsville Beach home that was damaged by fire when charcoal was disposed of improperly. Fortunately the fire was detected quickly, otherwise the outcome could have been much worse.



The Wrightsville Beach Fire Department offers the following tips for enjoying your barbecue grill safely.

## **Propane vs. Charcoal**

Gas grills are convenient, but propane must be handled with care. Use soap solution to check propane connections for leaks. Shut off the propane cylinder valve when the grill is not in use. Store propane cylinders outside away from your house. Propane is heavier than air. Gas leaking from a propane cylinder will travel along the ground until it finds an ignition source. If ignition occurs inside your house or garage, the results can be disastrous.

Charcoal grills require special care. Use only charcoal lighter fluid to start the fire. Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids. Use a limited amount of lighter fluid. Never add more lighter fluid after the coals have been lit; you could be burned by a flash fire. Remember that charcoal will continue to burn for many hours after you are finished cooking. Soak the coals with water, or place them in a tightly sealed metal container away from all combustible materials. Many fires have been started by windblown charcoal embers, or by improperly discarded coals.

## **Choosing a Location for Your Grill**

Choose a safe location for your grill. Barbecue grills should be placed on a stable, level surface. Avoid high traffic areas, and keep children away from the grill. Beware of windblown sparks igniting combustible materials, including combustible landscaping material such as pine straw.

Always grill in a well-ventilated area with good lighting. Barbecue grills are designed for outdoor use only. Never barbecue inside an enclosed area (house, garage, tent, trailer, etc.) because deadly carbon monoxide will accumulate.

For multifamily dwellings (more than two families), the North Carolina Fire Prevention Code prohibits using grills or any other open-flame cooking device on balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Even though the Fire Prevention Code does not apply to single-family or duplex dwellings, careful consideration should still be given to choosing a safe location for your barbecue grill. Keeping the grill at least 10 feet away from all combustible construction is still the safest alternative. If you choose to grill on your deck, a gas grill is the safest choice. Do not place the grill under combustible eaves or overhangs, and keep the grill away from combustible siding. Since hot coals can easily blow out of a charcoal grill and ignite combustible materials, charcoal grills should not be used on decks.

## **Cooking Safely**

Remember...anytime you work with fire there's a chance of getting burned. Protect yourself by wearing a heavy apron and an oven mitt that covers your forearm. To prevent your clothing from catching fire, roll up long sleeves and tuck in shirttails. Make sure that apron strings won't hang over the grill. Use long-handled barbecue utensils to avoid burns.

Never leave a lit grill unattended once. Keep everyone, especially children, away from the grill. Remember that grills remain hot long after you are done cooking. Continue to monitor the grill until it has cooled.

Use a Class B fire extinguisher or baking soda to extinguish a grease fire. Keep a water hose handy in case combustible materials are ignited. If a fire cannot be IMMEDIATELY extinguished, call 911 and move all occupants to a safe location.

## **Be Safe - Have Fun!**

Barbecue grills are the focal point of many outdoor gatherings. When used properly, barbecue grills are both safe and fun. Preplanning and attention to detail can assure a pleasant, trouble free cookout. We hope that these fire safety tips have been helpful. Please contact us if we can be of assistance. Enjoy the spring at Wrightsville Beach!

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