



PRESS RELEASE

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Peak Grilling Season Is Underway – Practice Grill Safety

Warm weather arrived earlier than expected this year and households across the county are firing up their backyard grills in preparation for spring and summer barbeques. May is peak grilling season and according to the *State of the Barbecue Industry (2023 Hearth, Patio, and Barbeque Association (HPBA))*, grill sales and grilling out are at an all-time high. The report states:

- 80% of all homeowners and 70% of all households in the U.S. own at least a grill or smoker; an increase from 64% household ownership in 2019.
- 38% of all grill owners purchased a new grill since the pandemic.

Formerly, the most popular days to grill were the traditional summer holidays, Labor Day, Memorial Day, and Father's Day. However, in recent years there has been an increase during the fall and winter months with the most popular grilling days, Thanksgiving Day (20%) and Super Bowl (30%), followed by Christmas or Hanukkah, New Year's Day, and Valentine's Day.

No matter the time of year, type, size, style, or method of cooking, when using a grill or any outdoor cooking equipment, one should take the necessary steps in learning how to safely cook to avoid fires, burns or worse. The leading factors in outdoor grill fires are:

- Something that could catch fire was too close to the grill.
- Unattended cooking.
- Leak or break in the grill (primarily gas grills).
- Failure to clean.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To prevent fires and grill-related injuries, Chief Thomas LaBelle, of the Prince William County Fire & Rescue System, advises residents to follow these simple safety tips:

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors.
- Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.

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- Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas, and foot traffic by maintaining a three (3) foot safety zone around the grill or smoker when in use and during cool down.
- Use long-handled grilling tools to provide clearance from heat and flames when cooking.
- Periodically remove grease or fat buildup in trays below the grill. The grease/fat can ignite from the grill's heat.
- Constantly attend to the grill or smoker when in use.

Charcoal Grills

- Purchase the proper starter fluid and store the can out of reach of children, and away from heat sources.
- **NEVER** add charcoal starter fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited.
- Place the used coals/ashes from your grill in a metal can with a lid, once they have cooled, store several feet away from the house and any combustibles.

****These safety precautions also apply to any wood-burning appliance, e.g., fireplaces, fire pits, chimineas, etc.***

Propane Grills

- Annually check the gas cylinder hose for leaks prior to using it for the first time.
- Make sure all hose connections are tight.
- Ensure the propane cylinder is secured.

Grill Safety for Apartments & Condominiums

- Prince William County Fire Prevention Code Section 9.1-45 prohibits the use and storage of any device that uses flammables, i.e., gasoline, charcoal lighter, liquefied petroleum gas or propane on a balcony.
- **DO NOT** use grills or smokers within 15 feet of any apartment, condominium, or building/structure.

For more information on grill safety for apartments and condominiums in Prince William County, visit pwcva.gov/departments/fire-marshals-office/grill-safety-apartments-condominiums.

For more information on grill safety, visit U.S. Fire Administration at usfa.fema.gov and the National Fire Protection Association at nfpa.org.

For more information on the barbeque industry, visit hpba.org.

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