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Focus on Summer Fire Safety: Grills, Fire Pits and Campfires

Every year Americans look forward to summer vacations, camping, family reunions, picnics, and the Fourth of July. Summertime, however, also brings fires and injuries due to outdoor cooking and recreational fires. Annually, there are almost 3,800 Americans injured by gas or charcoal grill fires.* Summertime should be a time of fun and making happy memories. Knowing a few fire safety tips and following safety instructions will help everyone have a safe summer.

*Source: Consumer Product Safety

Residential Grill Fire Facts

- An estimated 5,700 grill fires occur on residential properties each year in the United States.
 - Almost half (49 percent) of grill fires on residential properties occur from 5 to 8 p.m.
 - Over half (57 percent) of grill fires on residential properties occur in the four months of May, June, July, and August.
 - Thirty-two percent of grill fires on residential properties start on patios, terraces, screened-in porches, or courtyards.
- Keep children and pets from the grill area: declare a three-foot “safe zone” around the grill.
 - Put out several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when cooking.
 - Periodically remove grease or fat buildup in trays below the grill so it cannot be ignited by a hot grill.

Grill Safety

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors. If used indoors, or in any enclosed spaces such as tents, they pose both a fire hazard and the risk of exposing occupants to toxic gases and potential asphyxiation.
 - Position the grill well away from siding, deck railing, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
 - Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas, and foot traffic.
- Purchase the proper starter fluid and store out of reach of children and away from heat sources.
 - Never add charcoal starter fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited, and never use any flammable or combustible liquid other than charcoal starter fluid to get the fire going.

Propane Grills

- Check the propane cylinder hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. A light soap and water solution applied to the hose will reveal escaping propane quickly by releasing bubbles.
- If you determined your grill has a gas leak by smell or the soapy bubble test and there is no flame:
 1. Turn off the propane tank and grill.
 2. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again.
 3. 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 attempt to move the grill.
- All propane cylinders manufactured after April 2002 must have overfill protection devices (OPD). OPDs shut off the flow of propane before capacity is reached, limiting the potential for release of propane gas if the cylinder heats up. OPDs are easily identified by their triangular-shaped hand wheel.
- Use only equipment bearing the mark of an independent testing laboratory. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to set up the grill and maintain it.
- Never store propane cylinders in buildings or garages. If you store a gas grill inside during the winter, disconnect the cylinder and leave it outside.

First Aid for Burns

For minor burns, take the following action:

- Cool the burn. Hold the burned area under cool (not cold) running water for 10 or 15 minutes or until the pain subsides. If this is impractical, immerse the burn in cool water or cool it with cold compresses. Cooling the burn reduces swelling by conducting heat away from the skin. Don't put ice on the burn.
- Cover the burn with a sterile gauze bandage. Don't use fluffy cotton, or other material that may get lint in the wound. Wrap the gauze loosely to avoid putting pressure on burned skin. Bandaging keeps air off the burn, reduces pain and protects blistered skin.
- Take an over-the-counter pain reliever. These include aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen or acetaminophen. Use caution when giving aspirin to children or teenagers. Though aspirin is approved for use in children older than 2, children and teenagers recovering from chicken pox or flu-like symptoms should never take aspirin.

Talk to a doctor if you have concerns.

Source: Mayo Clinic

Fire Pits

In recent years, there has been a new concern for the fire service—fire pits.

Fire pits are known to be a great source of warmth and ambience. But, with the popularity of fire pits increasing, fire safety has become even more important. There are many things you should consider while setting up and using a fire pit.

- Keep away from flammable material and fluids such as gasoline, diesel fuel, kerosene, and charcoal lighter fluid or vehicles while in use.
- Do not use flammable fluids such as gasoline, alcohol, diesel fuel, kerosene, and charcoal lighter fluid to light or relight fires.
- Exercise the same precautions you would with an open fire.
- Do not allow children to use the fire pit. Keep children and pets away.
- Do not wear loose fitting or flammable clothing such as nylon.
- Do not burn trash, leaves, paper, cardboard, or plywood. Avoid using soft wood such as pine or cedar that often pops and throws sparks. Use of seasoned hardwood is suggested.
- Before starting the fire, make sure that the lid will still close to extinguish the fire in case of emergency. Do not overload.
- Before you light the fire, check the wind direction.
- Keep a fire extinguisher or garden hose nearby.

Source: Fire Pits Helper

Campfires

When building a camp fire, follow these campfire safety tips from Smokey Bear:

How to Pick Your Spot

- DO NOT build a fire at a site in hazardous, dry conditions. DO NOT build a fire if the campground, area, or event rules prohibit campfires.
- FIND OUT if the campground has an existing fire ring or fire pit.
- If there is not an existing fire pit, and pits are allowed, look for a site that is at least fifteen feet away from tent walls, shrubs, trees or other flammable objects. Also beware of low-hanging branches overhead.

Extinguishing Your Campfire

When you're ready to put out your fire and call it a night, follow these guidelines:

- Allow the wood to burn completely to ash, if possible.
- Pour lots of water on the fire; drown all embers, not just the red ones.
- Pour until hissing sound stops.
- Stir the campfire ashes and embers with a shovel.
- Scrape the sticks and logs to remove any embers.
- Stir and make sure everything is wet and cold to the touch.
- If you do not have water, use dirt. Mix enough dirt or sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cool. REMEMBER: do NOT bury the fire as the fire will continue to smolder and could catch roots on fire that will eventually get to the surface and start a wildfire.

REMEMBER: If it is too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave!

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The Hanover Insurance Company
440 Lincoln Street, Worcester, MA 01653

hanover.com
The Agency Place (TAP)—<https://tap.hanover.com>

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