

Barbecue Fire Safety

Don't let careless and unsafe barbecuing practices ruin your summer fun. Increase your summer enjoyment by following the safety tips below.

Fire Facts

- According to fire statistics maintained by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, propane was the fuel source used in 95 per cent of these incidents. Wear-failure and breaks or leaks were the most common causes of these fires.
- Propane and natural gas are safe and convenient fuels for barbecues when they are used properly. However, a fire or explosion can occur if a gas leaks into an enclosed, unventilated area. The spark that ignites the explosion may come from the operation of a wall switch, cell phone, telephone, or two-way radio.
- Solid fuels such as wood, chemical blocks or charcoal are alternative fuel sources for barbecues. These fuels take a while to heat up and ignite and leave hot, burnt coals that require careful disposal. Never add accelerants (such as gasoline) to speed up a slow burning barbecue. Allow the coals to cool before disposal.
- Carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas) can build up when a barbecue is used in an enclosed area with limited ventilation, leading to poisoning and even death.

Safety Tips

General

- Purchase only barbecues that bear the CSA, ITS or ULC label.
- Cleaning, maintenance and regular safety inspections must be part of your summer barbecuing routine.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions or use a trained professional for repairs and inspections.
- Use barbecues away from your home, car, dry vegetation, deck rails, wood balconies, twigs, tablecloths, and paper cups and plates.
- Trim tree limbs near the barbecue area to prevent the spread of fire from flare-ups of fuel or grease.
- Use long handled barbecue tongs and brushes to keep distance between you and the heat of the barbecue.
- Keep children away from the barbecue.
- Always have a fire extinguisher, baking soda and water available to put out a fire.
- Wear fitted clothing near a barbecue as flames can ignite loose clothing. Use a heavy apron and an oven mitt that fits high up over your forearm.
- Don't cook indoors with a barbecue (garages, sheds, etc.). Use barbecues in a ventilated outdoor area.
- When finished, be sure the gas is turned off and the flames are out. Close the lid to prevent re-ignition.

For more information, please contact the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at (780) 422-9000 (dial 310-000 for toll-free access outside of Edmonton) or visit www.aema.alberta.ca

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- If you are burned, run cool water over the burn for 10 to 15 minutes. **DO NOT** use butter or salve on burns — these products seal in heat and can cause further damage to the tissue. If you receive a serious burn, with charred skin, seek medical attention immediately.

Gas BBQ

- Locate barbecues in cool outdoor areas.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when fitting the gas cylinder to the barbecue.
- If your barbecue connection area has an "O" ring, check it every time you connect the cylinder. Replace missing, cracked or damaged "O" rings.
- After connecting the gas supply hose to the barbecue, open the propane cylinder or natural gas supply valve. Check for gas leaks by applying a soapy solution over the connections and hose. Soap bubbles will form if there is a leak. If a leak or fire occurs, turn off gas supply valve immediately.
- To prevent excessive gas build-up, always light the barbecue as soon as the gas flow is turned on. If using a match to light the barbecue, always light the match before turning on the gas. If the barbecue is equipped with an electronic igniter, follow directions on the control panel. If the barbecue doesn't light or goes out, turn off the valves, leave the lid open, wait five minutes, then try again.
- Never light a gas barbecue with the lid down. Gas trapped inside can easily ignite and cause the unit to explode.
- Always ensure that the cylinder valves are either fully open or fully closed.
- Prevent grease from dripping onto the hoses or cylinder, as grease build-up could be a potential fire hazard.
- Ensure all valves are turned off when barbecue is not in use.

Natural Gas BBQ

- Check the flames on your natural gas barbecue regularly — they should be mostly blue with yellow tips. If the flame is mostly yellow, stop using the barbecue and contact a qualified gasfitter.

Propane BBQ

- Propane cylinders **MUST** be retested every 10 years. Re-certification of the tank can be arranged through most propane filling stations.
- Never store extra propane cylinders under your barbecue or inside any structure. Excess heat may overpressure the cylinder and cause it to release propane from the cylinder relief valve.
- When transporting a propane cylinder, secure it in an upright position with a safety plug (POL plug) in place and keep the transport area well ventilated to prevent propane gas build up. A POL plug will prevent gas leakage when the valve is accidentally turned on, and is available through your local dealer.

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Solid Fuel BBQ

- Use recommended solid fuel fire starters only — accelerants such as gasoline can flash-back and explode. Electric fire starters are also available
- Store the remaining fire starter fluid in a safe place away from the grill.
- Do not add fire starter fluid to the fire after it has started. A vapour trail leading to the container can cause explosion and injury.
- Be sure fire starter fluids are not accessible to children, as they are poisonous when swallowed. Special childproof caps are available at your local dealer.
- Before disposing of the ashes, ensure they are thoroughly extinguished. Live coals or hot embers can start a fire. Be extremely cautious!