

Grilling Season: Good food, fun but also danger

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As the summer months near, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) urges everyone of basic safety tips and precautions to grill and celebrate safely.

NFPA data shows that from 2014-2018, fire departments responded to an annual average of 10,600 home fires annually involving grills, hibachis, or barbecues. This includes 4,900 structure fires and 5,700 outside or unclassified fires. These fires resulted in an annual average of 10 civilian deaths, 160 civilian injuries, and \$149 million in direct property damage.

The peak months for grilling fires are July (18 percent of grilling fires), June (15 percent), May (13 percent), and August (12 percent), though grill fires occur year-round. Leading causes of grill fires include failing to clean the grill, the heat source being located too close to combustible materials, leaving equipment unattended, and leaks or breaks in the grill or fuel source.

A yearly average of 19,700 patients went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills. Nearly half (9,500 or 48 percent) of the injuries were thermal burns, including both burns from fire and from contact

with hot objects; 5,200 thermal burns were caused by such contact or other non-fire events.

Children under five accounted for an average of 2,000 (39 percent) of the contact-type burns per year. These burns typically occurred when a child bumped into, touched, or fell on the grill, grill part, or hot coals.

“As grilling season approaches, it is important to review basic safety tips to ensure grillers are using equipment properly and safely, especially if the grill hasn’t been used over the winter,” NFPA Outreach and Advocacy Vice President Lorraine Carli said. “Establishing a firesafe location for using your grill is also crucial. It should be a safe distance from your home and other items that can burn.”

Carli said that as people continue to stay home in response to the pandemic, there may be an increased use of grills and other outdoor cooking equipment this season, making it critically important to share these messages with the public.

NFPA offers these and other tips and recommendations for enjoying a fire-safe grilling season:

For propane grills, check the gas tank for leaks before use in the months ahead. (Watch NFPA’s video on how to check for leaks.)

Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.

Place the grill well away from the home, deck railings, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.

Always make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it.

Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grilling area.

If you use starter fluid when charcoal grilling, only use charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire. When you have or are finished grilling, let the coals cool completely before disposing in a metal container.

Never leave your grill unattended when in use.