



SPARKS FIRE DEPARTMENT

FIRE CHIEF
Andreas Flock

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 6, 2009

CONTACTS: Fire Marshal Bob King, Fire Prevention Bureau, 353-2266

Fire-Up the Grills: Use These Safety Guidelines

Make Sure Your Outdoor Cooking Ventures Don't Include a Trip to the Emergency Room!

Sparks, Nevada ~ Sparks Fire Department urges everyone to enjoy great outdoor cooking safely. Each year, U.S. firefighters respond to nearly 8,000 home fires involving grills, hibachis, and barbecues. These fires cause an average of \$80 million in direct property damage. Over 18,500 patients visit emergency rooms each year with grilling-related injuries; over 25% of these burns are to children under 5 years of age. Most of the fires start on an exterior balcony or unenclosed porch.

"We're fortunate to have great grilling weather summer and fall," says Sparks Division Chief and Fire Marshal Bob King. "Everyone must be careful around these open flame and ignition sources."

Use these guidelines to protect your family and loved ones:

- Use grills at least 10 feet from your house and anything that will burn
 - *This includes siding, deck railings, eaves, and overhanging branches*
- Establish a 3-foot "Kid-Free Zone" around the grilling area. Watch out for pets, too!
- Grill outdoors only
 - *Minimize fire hazard and avoid risk of carbon-monoxide poisoning*
- Dispose of hot coals only in proper receptacles
 - *Coals may retain heat for 24 hours; may cause fire & injury if stepped on*
- Periodically remove grease/fat buildup in trays below the grill to avoid ignition and flare-ups
- Use long-handled tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames

Gas grills account for 81% of the fires, with over half resulting from leaks and breaks in gas cylinders and hoses. Charcoal/solid-fuel grills account for 16% of the fires, mainly because they are too close to combustibles or because cooking is left unattended.

"Nothing dampens an outdoor barbeque like a fire or burn," says Lorraine Carli of the National Fire Protection Association. "With simple steps, mishaps can be avoided and dinner saved." Sparks Fire Department encourages you to make your outdoor fun memorable for only good reasons!

Charcoal-Specific Safety Tips:

- Use only charcoal lighter fluid to start a fire
- Once coals are ignited, never add more fluid or flammable/petroleum based product to the fire; the container may explode in your hand!
- Store charcoal lighter fluid out of reach of children and away from heat sources

MORE####

Gas-Grill Specific Safety Tips:

- Ensure propane grills are installed with correct settings and according to manufacturer specifications
- Check the gas tank hose at least once every year. Use a light soap and water solution to test for escaping propane (bubbles will appear). If you determine your gas grill has a leak—by smell or the soapy bubble test—and there is no flame:
 - Turn off the gas tank and grill
 - If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again
 - 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.
- Only use equipment bearing the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never store propane gas tanks in buildings or garages. If you store a gas grill inside during the winter, disconnect the tank and leave it outside.

Citizens are reminded that you MUST have working smoke detectors in order to receive early notification of a fire. We recommend that every sleeping room and the hallways serving those sleeping rooms have a working smoke detector, and that everyone practices an evacuation plan monthly.

END####