

## **Remember Safety When Barbecuing This Summer**

Every year, millions of Americans safely enjoy outdoor barbecues, but accidents do happen.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, fire departments respond to an estimated average of 10,600 home structure and outdoor fires involving grills per year. These fires cause an average of 10 deaths, 160 injuries and \$149 million in direct property damage annually.

The majority of grill fires are caused by malfunctioning gas grills. In addition, thousands of people visit emergency rooms every year because they have burned themselves while barbecuing.

In the rare instance of a grill fire spreading to your property, your homeowner's insurance would provide financial protection as fire is a covered peril. A homeowner's policy covers the following:

- Damage to the house itself.
- Damage to personal possessions such as lawn furniture.
- Damage to insured structures on your property, such as a deck or shed.
- Injuries to a guest, under the liability portion of the policy.

Whatever the damage, you will be responsible for the deductible portion. So, if damage is less than your deductible, it may not make sense for you to file a claim.

That said, the best way to enjoy a summer of outdoor barbecues is to take steps to prevent accidents, including maintaining your grill and using it safely.

### **Grill maintenance and storage**

Gas grills are generally safe if they are properly maintained and checked for leaks. When setting up at the start of each grilling season, you should:

- Check grill hoses for cracks, holes and brittleness. Look for blockages as well, especially in the tube that runs to the burners. Clear blockages, which can be caused by food drippings, spiders or insects, with a wire or pipe cleaner.
- Run a soap solution (half liquid soap, half water) along hoses and at connections, then open the valve at your tank and check to make sure that gas isn't escaping, which will be indicated by bubbles at the leaking points.
- Adjust hoses as needed away from hot areas or where grease might drip on them.
- Store propane tanks outside, away from your house. Always check to make sure valves are turned off.

## Safe BBQ practices

When barbecuing, use common sense and follow these guidelines:

- Operate your grill on a level surface, away from the house, garage and landscaping. Don't move the grill once it is lit.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill.
- Protect yourself, or whoever is doing the grilling, with a heavy apron and oven mitts that reach high on the forearm.
- For charcoal grills, use only lighter fluid designed for grilling.
- Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids, and never add more lighter fluid once the fire has started.
- Never grill indoors or in enclosed areas. Charcoal grills will produce carbon monoxide fumes, which can be fatal in unventilated areas.
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby the area where you are grilling.

When you're done with your cooking, remember that the grill will remain hot for a while. Don't cover or store your grill until it has cooled, and soak coals with water before throwing them away.

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