

May 17, 2015

8 easy ways to get ready for a safe BBQ season

With the warm weather and longer days upon us, people are flocking outdoors to enjoy backyards, beaches and parks, often with barbecues and beach fires in the plans.

Since barbecues and beach fires are a popular way to connect with family and friends during the warmer months, here are a few common sense guidelines for beach fires and barbecue preparation and maintenance that will ensure your outdoor get-togethers are safe.

- Complete a barbecue safety check, cleaning and maintenance prior to initial use each year. Ensure the hoses are clear and in good repair with no cracks. Insects often build nests that can block hoses. If the fittings, flex hose or burners are worn or rusted, be sure to replace them.
- Check the cylinder connections for leaks before lighting your barbecue for the first time each season or any time you have replaced the tank. A leak-detection solution of equal parts liquid soap and water is a handy way to make sure all connections are tight.
- Don't barbecue in an enclosed space such as a garage. For ventilation and safety reasons, move your barbecue into the open at least three metres away from windows and doors.
- Don't place your barbecue near wooden surfaces, beneath a combustible roof overhang or even under a tree with low branches. Be extra careful about the area behind the barbecue where hot gases escape and could create a fire hazard.
- Never store propane cylinders in your home.
- Don't allow grease to build up. Clean the burners and grill regularly to minimize the risk of a serious grease fire.
- Turn the valve off first when you finish. This allows the gas in the hose to be burned off. Then turn off the burner controls so no gas remains trapped in the hose.
- For a briquette barbecue, be sure to dispose of the ashes by placing them in a non-combustible (metal) container filled with water prior to disposing.

If your barbecue catches fire, call 9-1-1 immediately. Barbecue fires are typically a result of grease buildup, poor maintenance or leaks in the supply line. If it is safe to do so, shut the gas off to the barbecue at the cylinder, this will stop the flow of fuel from the cylinder should the supply line burn through and eliminate an even greater danger.

The Campbell River Fire Department would like to remind residents that recreational fires in backyard fire pits and on the beach cannot be larger than 60 centimetres (24 inches) in diameter. Be sure to fully extinguish the fire before you leave. Remember: If it's too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave!

For more tips on BBQ safety and other fire safety information visit www.crfd.ca.

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