

# Safety tips for grilling and campfires

Every year Americans look forward to summer vacations, camping, family reunions, picnics, and the Fourth of July. Summertime, however, also brings fires and injuries due to outdoor cooking and recreational fires. Annually, there are almost 3,800 Americans injured by gas or charcoal grill fires.

Your Sylvania Fire fighters think summertime should be a time of fun and making happy memories. Knowing a few fire safety tips provided by the United States Fire Administration and your Sylvania Fire Department and following safety instructions will help everyone have a safe summer.

## Grill Safety

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors. If used indoors, or in any enclosed spaces such as tents, they pose both a fire hazard and the risk of exposing occupants to toxic gases and potential asphyxiation.
- Position the grill well away from siding, deck railing, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas, and foot traffic.
- Keep children and pets from the grill area: declare a three-foot "safe zone" around the grill.
- Put out several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when cooking.
- Periodically remove grease or fat buildup in trays below the grill so it cannot be ignited by a hot grill.

## Charcoal Grills

- Purchase the proper starter fluid and store out of reach of children and away from heat sources.
- Never add charcoal starter fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited, and never use any flammable or combustible liquid other than charcoal starter fluid to get the fire going.

## Propane Grills

- Check the propane cylinder hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. A light soap and water solution applied to the hose will reveal escaping propane quickly by releasing bubbles.
- If you determined your grill has a gas leak by smell or the soapy bubble test and there is no flame:
  1. Turn off the propane tank and grill.
  2. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again.
  3. 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.
- All propane cylinders manufactured after April 2002 must have overfill protection devices (OPD). OPDs shut off the flow of propane before capacity is reached, limiting the potential for release of propane gas if the cylinder heats up. OPDs are easily identified by their triangular-shaped hand wheel.

- Use only equipment bearing the mark of an independent testing laboratory. Follow the manufacturers' instructions on how to set up the grill and maintain it.
- Never store propane cylinders in buildings or garages. If you store a gas grill inside during the winter, disconnect the cylinder and leave it outside.

## **Fire Pits**

In recent years, there has been a new concern for the Fire Service - fire pits. Fire pits are known to be a great source of warmth and ambience. But, with the popularity of fire pits increasing, fire safety has become even more important. There are many things you should consider while setting up and using a fire pit.

- Keep away from flammable material and fluids such as gasoline, diesel fuel, kerosene, and charcoal lighter fluid or vehicles while in use.
- Do not use flammable fluids such as gasoline, alcohol, diesel fuel, kerosene, and charcoal lighter fluid to light or relight fires.
- Exercise the same precautions you would with an open fire.
- Do not allow children to use the fire pit. Keep children and pets away.
- Do not wear flammable or loose fitting clothing such as nylon.
- Do not burn trash, leaves, paper, cardboard, or plywood. Avoid using soft wood such as pine or cedar that likely pop and throw sparks. Use of seasoned hardwood is suggested.
- Before starting the fire, make sure that the lid will still close to extinguish the fire in case of emergency. Do not overload.
- Before you light the fire, check the wind direction.
- Keep a fire extinguisher or garden hose nearby.

## **Campfires**

When building a camp fire, follow these campfire safety tips:

### **How to Pick Your Spot**

- DO NOT build a fire at a site in hazardous, dry conditions. DO NOT build a fire if the campground, area, or event rules prohibit campfires.
- FIND OUT if the campground has an existing fire ring or fire pit.
- If there is not an existing fire pit, and pits are allowed, look for a site that is at least fifteen feet away from tent walls, shrubs, trees or other flammable objects. Also beware of low-hanging branches overhead.

### **Extinguishing Your Campfire**

When you're ready to put out your fire and call it a night, follow these guidelines:

- Allow the wood to burn completely to ash, if possible.
- Pour lots of water on the fire; drown all embers, not just the red ones.
- Pour until hissing sound stops.

- Stir the campfire ashes and embers with a shovel.
- Scrape the sticks and logs to remove any embers.
- Stir and make sure everything is wet and they are cold to the touch.
- If you do not have water, use dirt. Mix enough dirt or sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cool. REMEMBER: do NOT bury the fire as the fire will continue to smolder and could catch roots on fire that will eventually get to the surface and start a wildfire.

REMEMBER: If it is too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave!

### **First Aid for Burns**

For minor burns, take the following action:

- **Cool the burn.** Hold the burned area under cool (not cold) running water for 10 or 15 minutes or until the pain subsides. If this is impractical, immerse the burn in cool water or cool it with cold compresses. Cooling the burn reduces swelling by conducting heat away from the skin. Don't put ice on the burn.
- **Cover the burn with a sterile gauze bandage.** Don't use fluffy cotton, or other material that may get lint in the wound. Wrap the gauze loosely to avoid putting pressure on burned skin. Bandaging keeps air off the burn reduces pain and protects blistered skin.
- **Take an over-the-counter pain reliever.** These include aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen or acetaminophen. Use caution when giving aspirin to children or teenagers. Though aspirin is approved for use in children older than 2, children and teenagers recovering from chickenpox or flu-like symptoms should never take aspirin.

\*\* If you have any concerns about a burn or injury, dial 911. Your Sylvania Firefighters are there to respond and provide care and advice to you about your injury.

### **Residential Grill Fire Facts**

- An estimated 5,700 grill fires occur on residential properties each year in the United States.
- Almost half (49 percent) of grill fires on residential properties occur from 5 to 8 p.m.
- Over half (57 percent) of grill fires on residential properties occur in the 4 months of May, June, July, and August.
- Thirty-two percent of grill fires on residential properties start on patios, terraces, screened-in porches, or courtyards.

## Ohio & EPA open burning Laws

From the Ohio EPA:

**What is open burning?** You are open burning any time you light an outdoor fire without a chimney or stack.

**What open burning is never allowed?** Under Ohio law, these materials *may not* be burned anywhere in the state at any time:

- Garbage—any wastes created in the process of handling, preparing, cooking or consuming food;
- Materials containing rubber, grease and asphalt or made from petroleum, such as tires, cars and auto parts, plastics or plastic-coated wire; and
- Dead animals.

### Does Ohio EPA ever allow exceptions to the rules?

Under certain circumstances, yes. However, to burn a prohibited material or set a fire in a restricted area, you must receive written permission from Ohio EPA and the fire department *before* you begin burning. This may take two weeks.

The following open fires are *allowed* in Ohio:

Barbeques, campfires, cookouts. Use clean, seasoned firewood or equivalent.

Wood stack no larger than 2 ft. high x 3 ft. wide.

From the Ohio Fire Code **Section 307 Open burning, and recreational fires and portable outdoor fireplaces:**

**307.1 General.** A person shall not kindle or maintain or authorize to be kindled or maintained any open burning unless conducted and approved in accordance with this *paragraph*.

(a) **307.1.1 Prohibited open burning.** Open burning that is offensive or objectionable because of smoke or odor emissions or when atmospheric conditions or local circumstances make such fires hazardous shall be prohibited.

**307.3 Extinguishment authority.** The fire code official is authorized to order the extinguishment by the permit holder, another person responsible or the fire department of open burning that creates or adds to a hazardous or objectionable situation.

**307.4 Location.** The location for open burning shall not be less than 50 feet (15 240 mm) from any structure, and provisions shall be made to prevent the fire from spreading to within 50 feet (15 240 mm) of any structure.

#### Exceptions:

1. Fires in approved containers that are not less than 15 feet (4572 mm) from a structure.

2. The minimum required distance from a structure shall be 25 feet (7620 mm) where the pile size is 3 feet (914 mm) or less in diameter and 2 feet (610 mm) or less in height.

(a) **307.4.1 Bonfires.** A bonfire shall not be conducted within 50 feet (15 240 mm) of a structure or combustible material unless the fire is contained in a barbecue pit. Conditions which could cause a fire to spread within 50 feet (15 240 mm) of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition.

(b) **307.4.2 Recreational fires.** Recreational fires shall not be conducted within 25 feet (7620 mm) of a structure or combustible material. Conditions which could cause a fire to

spread within 25 feet (7620 mm) of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition.

(c) **307.4.3 Portable outdoor fireplaces.** Portable outdoor fireplaces shall be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and shall not be operated within 15 feet (3048 mm) of a structure or combustible material.

**Exception:** Portable outdoor fireplaces used at one-and two-family dwellings.

**307.5 Attendance.** Open burning, bonfires, or recreational fires and use of portable outdoor fireplaces shall be constantly attended until the fire is extinguished. A minimum of one portable fire extinguisher complying with *paragraph (F)(906) of rule 1301:7-7-09 of the Administrative Code* with a minimum 4-A rating or other approved on-site fire-extinguishing equipment, such as dirt, sand, water barrel, garden hose or water truck, shall be available for immediate utilization

More information is available on the fire department Web Site -