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# Boston Fire Department

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Barbecue Safety

May 2009

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BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION

## Safety First!

**I** mportant Note: Always follow ALL of the manufactures instructions and keep written materials and manuals in a safe, accessible place.

## Regulations

The following regulations apply to the use of portable charcoal and gas operated cooking grilles on or within a building or structure and includes balconies, fire escapes, porches, roofs as a part thereof;

### Charcoal Grills

Under the authority of Article 1, section 1.05(b) of the Boston Fire Prevention Code, the Boston Fire Department prohibits the use of portable charcoal cooking grilles on or within a building or structure for the following reasons:

- Improper use of starter fuel resulting in burn
- Numerous fire safety complaints to the Boston Fire Department by persons within or near the building.

- Wind velocity affecting open flame.
- Fire hazard conditions high or extreme.
- Resultant Fire Department response due to persons observing assumed building fire from a distance and/or reports of smoke odor from an assumed building fire in the area.
- Lack of attendance resulting in unwarranted smoke pollution.
- Danger of explosive gas build up.

### Gas Operated Grills

Chapter 527 of the Commonwealth of Mass. Board of Fire Prevention regulations section 6.07 (5) (a) prohibits the use or storage of liquefied petroleum gas containers used for barbecue cooking inside or on balconies above the first floor of any building or structure used for habitation.

*This includes 1-lb. propane containers attached to portable cooking grills.*

Propane containers shall be located in areas where there is free air circulation, at least 3 feet from building openings (such as windows and doors), and at least 5 feet from air intakes of air conditioning and ventilating systems (NFPA 58 Appendix 1, fig. 1-1).

**Under no circumstances may gas or charcoal grills be used on fire escapes or fire escape balconies.**

527CMR 6.08(e) state that no permit is required for the storage and use of LP gas (propane) cylinders of an amount less than 42 lbs. This allows the use and storage of 2 20-lb. propane cylinders without a permit.

## General Safety Tips

It always pays for consumers to be aware that following a few simple safety precautions will help ensure that their outdoor cooking remains trouble-free and enjoyable.

- LP Grills are not permitted inside or on balconies above the first floor of any building or

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structure used for habitation.

- Always locate a barbecue away from any combustible wall.
- Set up grill in an open area away from buildings, dry leaves or brush. Be aware of the wind blowing sparks.
- Place grill on a level surface away from low hanging trees, deck railings, siding or any combustible materials
- It's a good idea to keep a fire extinguisher within handy reach.
- Use long handled barbecue tools and flame retardant mitts.
- Do not wear loose clothing and watch for dangling apron strings and shirt tails.
- NEVER leave children or pets unattended near a hot grill.

## Gas Grill Safety

Gas grills are safe and convenient appliances when assembled and used properly. Gas grills bring into play another element, Liquid Propane (LP). LP gas is pressurized and requires special handling and storage. These few tips will make all

of your barbecues safe and enjoyable.

- Before having an LP cylinder filled, check it for dents, gouges or other signs of disrepair.
- When having a cylinder filled, it is important to make sure that the cylinder is not overfilled.
- Check and make sure all connections are tight BEFORE turning on the gas. Leaks can be detected by dabbing the connections with a solution of soapy water and turning on the gas momentarily. If bubbles occur, there is a leak and it must be fixed before the grill is used.
- Never store a spare LP cylinder under or near a barbecue, heat source or open flame.
- Never ignite a gas grill with the lid closed. The propane may accumulate inside, and when ignited, the lid could blow off.
- Store extra cylinders outdoors in a shaded area.
- ALWAYS insert the POL safety plug into the LP cylinder valve outlet when not hooked up to the grill.
- When the LP cylinder is connected, the grill must be kept outside in a well-vented space. Never use

gas grills inside a house, garage or any enclosed area, because carbon monoxide may accumulate and could cause serious injury or death.

- When finished with the grill, turn off the barbecue burners and the propane cylinder.
- The pressure relief valve will release propane if the pressure inside the cylinder becomes too great. Pressure varies according to temperature, regardless of the amount of propane inside.

## Transporting LP Cylinders

When transporting LP cylinders it is important to follow these procedures:

- Close the valve tightly, even if empty.
- Insert the POL plug securely into the valve.
- Place the LP cylinder on the floor, in back of the passenger seat. Make sure it is secured and that the windows are rolled down for ventilation.
- LP cylinders **SHOULD NOT** be transported in the trunk. If you must transport the cylinder this way, the cylinder should be placed gently in the trunk and fastened so it

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will not shift. The trunk should be secured as to allow it to remain partially open.

- Cylinders must always be upright, whether in storage, during transportation, or in use.
- Cylinders should never be transported, stored or installed in an enclosed space. In permanent dwellings or recreational vehicles, cylinders must be outside, or in compartments that are sealed from the inside and vented from the outside. This will avoid a dangerous build-up of propane vapors.

## Clean Grill Safe Grill

Your owner's manual should give detailed instructions on this procedure. If you are not comfortable with doing the cleaning yourself, you will want to take it to an authorized dealer for cleaning. Clean your venturi tubes on gas barbecues regularly. Insects love to build nests in these tubes, causing blockages. This makes grills difficult to ignite and may force gas outside the venturi tube. In addition, this poses a serious problem because it interferes with the gas flow making the flame uneven and dangerous.

## Charcoal Grill Safety

Gas grills have taken over the grill market, however some people still prefer to use charcoal grills for their barbecues. It is important to note that charcoal grills have some potentially dangerous components that the user must be familiar with when using this type of grill.

- NEVER use gasoline or kerosene to start the fire.
- Always use charcoal grills in a well-ventilated area. Charcoal briquettes give off the deadly gas carbon monoxide.
- After using starter fluid, cap the container and move it away from the fire. NEVER add any type of starter fluid once the coals are burning.
- To stop flare-ups, move cooking grid up and spread out coals.
- Allow coals to burn out completely and let ashes cool for 48 hours.
- If you must dispose of the ashes before fully cooled, soak them completely in water before putting them in a non-combustible container.
- To dispose of the ashes, wrap in foil and put them in an empty non-combustible container.

## Final Note

Every year, people are killed or injured in fires and explosions caused by the malfunction or careless use of grills. If you use common sense, follow your owners manual and practice the safety tips provided in this newsletter, your barbecues will be safe and trouble-free.

### For More Information:

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Association (BIA)

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Safety Tip Hotline  
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