

State Fire Marshal issues summer grill fire safety tips

June 2 2016 3:02 PM



SPRINGFIELD - With the barbecue season here and grills lighting up all across Illinois, the Office of the State Fire Marshal reminds residents to take proactive measures to keep their summer barbecues safe and fun for all involved.

According to the **National Fire Protection Association**, between 2009 and 2013, US fire departments responded to an average of 8,900 grill-related fires per year, which caused an annual average of ten civilian deaths, 160 civilian injuries and \$118 million in

direct property damage. Grill usage peaks in the summer months, so it is not surprising that nearly 60 percent of grill fires nationwide occur between May and August.

Residents should also be aware of grill-related, non-fire burns. In 2014, hospital emergency rooms saw an estimated 5,200 patients for burns caused by contact with hot grill surfaces. Of those, about one third were children under five years old.

“There’s nothing quite like a flame-grilled burger during the summer,” said State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “Since well over half of grill fires happen between May and August, we’re asking residents to stay vigilant as they prepare their summer meals.”

Fortunately, most grill fires and non-fire injuries are preventable if residents are proactive and cautious. The National Fire Protection Association provides the following tips:

Barbecue grills of all kinds should only be used outdoors and kept away from the home, any overhanging branches and deck railings. Never leave a grill unattended. Always keep children and pets a minimum of three feet away from the grilling area. Keeping your grill clean by scrubbing any grease or fat from the grill and trays below before lighting also helps prevent grease fires. Roughly one in five gas grill fires starts due to a failure to clean grill surfaces.

Propane and gas grills are involved in five out of every six grill fires, and the NFPA provides the following advice for users of gas grills:

Always have your gas grill lid open when lighting it The most common way for a propane grill to catch fire is through a gas leak. You should check for a gas leak before the first time you use your grill each year. To check for a gas leak, apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. If the hose releases bubbles, turn off both the grill and the gas tank. If the leak stops, have your grill professionally serviced before you use it again If the leak does not stop, call your fire department. If you smell gas while cooking, back away from the grill immediately and call your fire department. If the flame goes out while you’re cooking, turn both the grill and gas off and wait for at least 5 minutes before re-lighting.

Residents using charcoal grills should observe the following:

- 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.

- When you finish grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing them in a metal container.

With the right precautions, grilling outside can be a safe, fun and tasty summer activity for friends and family. For more fire and grilling safety tips, check out <http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information>.