

Safety; A Top Priority When Firing Up The Grill This Holiday Weekend

by Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal
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SPRINGFIELD - The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is reminding Illinoisans to make sure they are following proper safety practices when using their grills this holiday weekend and throughout the rest of the summer. July is the peak month for grill fires followed by June, May and August.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), reports around 64% of U.S. households own at least one outdoor BBQ, grill or smoker. Gas grills contribute to a

higher number of fires than charcoal grills. The NFPA reports 61% of households own a gas grill. On average, 10,200 home fires are started by a grill each year. In 2017-2021, U. S. fire departments responded to an average of 11,421 home fires involving grills, hibachis, or barbecues per year, including an average of 5,763 structure fires and 5,659 outside or unclassified fires. During the same time, an average of 22,155 patients per year went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills. Nearly half (10,342 or 47%) of the injuries were thermal burns, including both burns from fire and from contact with hot objects.

“Backyard barbeques are a popular way many celebrate during the 4th of July holiday weekend. It’s important that you are prepared by cleaning your grills and making sure they are in proper working order, while also taking the proper precautions to keep your guests safe,” said Illinois State Fire Marshal James A. Rivera. “Burns not only could ruin a fun weekend, but they can also leave lasting impacts on people physically and mentally for the rest of their life.”

The Office of the State Fire Marshal advises everyone to take these steps to help ensure a safe summer filled with everyone’s favorite grilled foods:

- Propane and charcoal grills should only be used outdoors
- The grill should be placed away from the home or deck railing, and out from under eaves of your home and overhanging tree branches
- Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grilling area
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill
- Never leave your grill unattended
- Always make sure gas grill lids are open before lighting it
- Check the gas tank on your propane grills and hoses for leaks each time before using
- If you smell gas while grilling, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department
- Make sure charcoal grill coals are cool before disposing of them in a metal container
- Always have a fire extinguisher, bucket of water or garden hose nearby or know where you can access one quickly

Bonfires, pit fires and campfires can also create fire safety dangers during the summer months. Campfires need to be built at least 25 feet way from tents, shrubs and anything that can burn. Make sure fires are allowed in the area that you are camping. Use of chimineas, outdoor fireplaces and fire pits need to be at least 10 feet away from your home or anything that can burn.

For more information about grilling please visit the National Fire Protection Association's website at: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Seasonal-fire-causes/Grilling>.