

Safety Health Publishing

Off the Job Safety - Barbecue Safety

Barbecue season is upon us. This means many people will be enjoying cooking and eating food that was prepared in this manner. It also means people will be injured and thousands of dollars of property damage will result because of carelessness. Even people who use combustible products safely at the worksite will make mistakes and ignore safety practices once they are at home. As a fire fighter and paramedic I have responded to many barbecue fires that could have been prevented. The following are a few tips we should keep in mind to help us have a safe barbecue season:

1. After purchasing a barbecue, make sure you follow the manufacturer's directions for assembly and use.
2. Don't use your barbecue indoors. Fire and carbon monoxide poisoning are a real threat. Keep the barbecue a safe distance (over 3 meters, or 10 feet) from your house. If there is a fire, you don't want it to spread to your house.
3. Keep your barbecue's propane tank in an upright position. If it's not in an upright position, the tanks relief valve may not work properly. Also make sure the burner ports are clear of rust and dirt.
4. Check for leaks by putting a soapy solution on the connection of the tank and hoses. Where you see bubbles, tighten the connection. If you can't stop the bubbles, don't use the barbecue - it's leaking propane. Never use a match to check for leaks.
5. When lighting a gas barbecue, keep the lid open to avoid gas buildup and light the barbecue as soon as you turn on the gas. Keep your face away from the grill. Make sure the flame is visible from the burner ports.
6. A barbecue lighter with a long handle is safer to use than matches. It provides the extra reach that reduces the chance of singed hair or a burn to your body.
7. When finished barbecuing, turn off the burner and the tank valve.
8. Never use gas or naphtha to light a charcoal barbecue. Always use barbecue lighter fluid and let it soak for five minutes before lighting. Read and follow the directions on the can.
9. Make sure coals are cool before you dispose of them.
10. Avoid wearing baggy sleeves when cooking over a barbecue. They could catch fire.
11. Remember, the entire barbecue assembly is hot. Keep children away.

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