



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Safety Tips: Outdoor Cooking



It's summer time and the grills are getting "fired up." This is the prime time of the year in my estimation. But with grilling times comes the risks of possible incidents that can occur when we get careless with our outdoor grilling skills. This has very little to do with Agriculture safety, but most everyone cooks out in the summer, so I believe it is prudent to have a "heads up" on grilling safety.

Through last year, 2011, the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) stated that 86% of the U.S.A. households own a grill or smoker and 62% of these folks use their grill year-round. Also, in 2011 there were 14.7 million units of grills and smokers sold. U.S. fire departments annually respond to 9,000 home fires that involve grills, smokers, and hibachis, resulting in approximately 150 injuries and \$90 million dollars in direct property damage.

Following are some tips that, if adhered to, can reduce the potential for a possible outdoor cooking accident:

- ✓ **FIRE** – Fire is the most destructive force in the world and here we bring it into our back yards and patios. It is critical that we know our fires and how to control them while cooking, and we need to have a fire extinguisher very close by. Grills and smokers cause hundreds of fires and property losses each year.
- ✓ **FOOD SAFETY** – Bacteria eats away at all foods, even brussel sprouts. It grows at any temperature above freezing and stays alive until the heat temperature reaches 165° F. Every second it will grow bacteria, so when it is cooked - eat it and return to the refrigerator. **The basic rules for cooking are: Suspect Everything, Keep it covered, Keep it Cool, Get it Hot and Use Your Head.** Remember: It is easier to get food poisoning than to catch the flu.
- ✓ **INSTRUCTIONS** – Read the manual - follow the instructions. Don't assume that your present grill or smoker operates like your last one. Get familiar with the new instruction manual and follow its requirements for a great new cooking experience.
- ✓ **LOCATION** – Locating your grill is critical because the potential for a fire is evident when it is too close to your home, a building or a utility shed. The instructions will tell you what distance to maintain while cooking. Also, keep children and pets at a reasonable distance away from the grill. Never use your grill in a garage or enclosed area or under low hanging limbs for the obvious reason – the fire and gas fumes that results in nausea or worst.

- ✓ **GAS SAFETY** – **The #1 cause of gas grill fires is obstructions in the path of the fuel.** This normally takes place inside the grill, beneath it, or behind it where you don't normally look. To remedy this problem, each time, before you fire up the grill, give it a "going over" for bugs, critters, or other debris that might obstruct the flow of the fuel. When you first notice a problem, turn off the grill, turn off the fuel tank and disconnect all the controls. Gas grills can produce a lot of heat, enough to melt hoses, knobs and other parts. Assume everything is 3rd degree hot.
- ✓ **CHARCOAL SAFETY** – Charcoal grills cause more fires than gas. **The #1 problem with charcoal grills is lighting the fire.** Lighter fluid causes all kinds of problems, and it would be to one's advantage to find another method for lighting the fire. What really burns the hair off your face is adding lighter fluid to hot coals. Lighter fluid turns to a heavy gas at a relatively low temperature. Liquid lighter fluid burns and evaporated (gaseous) fluid explodes. Follow the instructions to the letter and please don't let lighting charcoal become a game.
- ✓ **GREASE** – Using flammable materials is bad enough for cooking, but the food itself is creating more. Flare ups are a nuisance; they are also lethal. Grease builds up over time. In fact, you can collect several lbs. in just a few cookings. This is a real valid reason for checking your grill before each cooking - **check the grease reservoir before each cooking.** A clean grill, whether it is gas or charcoal is a much safer. Smokers aren't exempt. They can catch fire from grease collecting as well. Keep the grease reservoir clean.
- ✓ **CANCER** – Cooking, by any method, of meats (red meat & chicken) at very high temperatures until there is charring on the surface can cause cancer causing substances. However, no one has proven how much it takes to create these substances.
- ✓ **SMOKE** – Smoke is an integral part of grilling. Breathing smoke in can be a problem, as it contains some carbon monoxide. As much as we like the smell of meat smoking on the grill, we need to keep a reasonable distance away from the smoke while cooking.
- ✓ **ALCOHOL** – Grilling and smoking foods requires a clear head, so it's better to omit the "adult libation" until the cooking is done and the fire is out. This way you are assured that you "won't get done before the meat."

Ted Gordon – Risk Mgmt. / Loss Control Mgr.
MAFES / MSU-ES (662) 566-2201
Excerpts: <http://bbq.about.com/od/grillinghelp>
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TO AVOID A SCENE-
KEEP YOUR GRILL RESERVOIR CLEAN!
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~BE ALERT -XXXX- ACCIDENTS HURT~