

# GRILLING SAFETY

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NOTHING IS MORE INVITING than the smell of food cooking on the grill. However, grilling can be a dangerous activity. According to [nfpa.org](http://nfpa.org), in 2006-2010, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 8,600 home and outside fires related to grills (gas and sold fuel), smokers and hibachis. These 8,600 fires caused an annual average of 10 civilian deaths, 140 civilian injuries and \$75 million in direct property damage. Helping your insureds understand the hazards and avoid property damage and injury is another sign of the true insurance professional.

Practicing grill safety can save lives. Start by checking to see if the grill has been recalled. Over 1 million grills have been recalled since 2007. ([consumerreports.org](http://consumerreports.org)) Fill out the product registration cards. That way you will be notified in the event the grill is recalled.

Consumer Product Safety Commission ([cpsc.gov](http://cpsc.gov)) recommends that the hoses be checked every year to be sure they are not brittle or kinked, and are properly attached. Open the valves and brush a soap solution (equal parts water and dish detergent) on all connections to check for leaks. Bubbles are a sign of a leak. Tighten connections and test again. If there are still bubbles, have the grill checked by a professional. Inspect the Venturi tubes to be sure they are not blocked by spider webs or dirt. The Venturi tubes are a space or gap that allows gas to mix with air before entering the burner.

Keep the grill at least five feet away from buildings and other combustible structures. Store extra propane tanks

outside, in an upright position and away from heat – NOT underneath the grill. After the tank is filled, take it home immediately. Do not leave it in the car.

If you need to relight a grill, turn off the gas, leave the top open, and wait five minutes for any gas to dissipate. In December 2012, sportscaster Hannah Storm suffered first and second degree burns to her face, neck, and hands, lost her eyebrows and half of her hair when she tried to reignite a propane grill that had gone out. ([www.people.com](http://www.people.com))

Charcoal and other solid fuels pose additional hazards. Never squirt lighter fluid on a lit grill. Flames can follow the stream back to the can, causing an explosion and severe burns. Douse used coals with plenty of water, and put them into a fire-proof container. Do not dump them on the ground where people and pets can step on them. If possible, store covered for at least two days before discarding.

A grill should never be left unattended, even for a minute, especially when there are children and pets around. Keep a fire extinguisher nearby. Exposed skin can burn from grease splatters or sparks, so wear a shirt when grilling, but avoid loose clothing.

Allow gas grills to cool completely before covering. Clean the grates and drip pan regularly to minimize flare ups. Several pounds of grease can build up



after only a few uses.

Burning grease forms a number of dangerous materials, including carbon monoxide and cancer-causing agents. In particular, charcoal continues to release the deadly colorless, odorless gas until it is completely cool, so do not store a recently used charcoal grill inside. Coals can reignite even after they appear to be cold. CPSC estimates that carbon monoxide from charcoal grills used inside causes about 25 deaths per year.

Grilling is a fun summertime activity. Helping clients prevent accidents and possible tragedies is another value-added service of the professional insurance agent.

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