

Preventing Grilling Fires



Gas grills continue to be the number-one cause of residential fires due to leaks and breaks. On average, 7,900 fires result from gas grills. July is the peak month for fires.

These tips can help you prevent fires caused by grilling and deep frying:

- Maintain a clearance of at least 10 feet from all combustible materials.
- Never leave a grill unattended.
- Clean out the grill regularly, including the grease traps.
- Always make sure your propane tank is secure and the supply line to the grill is firmly connected.
- Empty the ash/coal catcher under the grill before and after each use once the coals have cooled.
- Put the ash/coal in a covered non-combustible container and keep them at least 10 feet from any buildings.
- At least twice a year, check for leaks on the gas tank hose on propane grills.

From 2011-2015, fire departments responded to 9,600 home fires each year involving grills, hibachis, or deep fryers. Of those 9,600 fires, 4,100 result in structure fires. Cooking fires send 16,600 patients each year to the emergency room. Grilling fires result in \$118 million in property damage each year.

The number-one reason for grill fires is the failure to clean. This accounts for 24% of all grill fires. The primary causes of grill fires are having the grill too close to combustibles (15%), leaving the equipment unattended (15%), a leak or break in gas line (14%), and using the grill for warming (7%).

Thirty-two percent of grill fires on residential properties start on patios, terraces, screened-in porches, or courtyards, while an additional 24 percent start on exterior balconies and unenclosed porches.

West Bend's policy states that no grilling, deep frying, or heating operations of any kind are allowed on decks, patios, porches, or balconies for residential dwellings. In addition, all grilling and deep frying appliances must maintain a clearance of at least 10 feet from all combustible material, including building walls, decks, patios, trees, shrubs, and brush. If the local municipality's code is more strict, (for example 25 feet from combustible material), West Bend's policyholders must follow those requirements.

Advice for apartment owners, management companies, and condo associations

Include in the lease/condo association rules: "Occupants shall not store, grill, or deep fry inside the dwelling unit, on a deck or patio of a dwelling unit, or within 10 feet of any combustible material."

