

BBQ Fire Safety

A Fire Safety Message from the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control

What you should know about barbecue maintenance and safety.

Holding a barbecue should be a safe and fun experience for everyone. It is very important to keep children away from any area near hot charcoals or open flames. To prevent injuries or damage to property, please take the following precautions:

① Maintenance and Safety First

- Ensure that your barbecue is sound and in good working order.
- Make sure the cooking site for the barbecue is flat and is away from sheds, fences, and overhanging branches.
- Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings and out from under eaves.
- Never use a barbecue indoors or in tents. This is a dangerous fire hazard and can cause high levels of carbon monoxide.
- Keep children and outdoor games away from the cooking area. Never leave a barbecue unattended.
- Light barbecues with a long match or mechanical lighter designed for lighting barbecues. Keep all matches, lighters and barbecue lighters out of the reach of children.
- Use long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames
- Allow the barbecue to cool before attempting to move it.

② Charcoal Briquette Barbecues

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Use only sufficient charcoal to cover the base of the barbecue to a depth of about 2 inches. Store extra charcoal in a metal container with a tight-fitting lid to keep it dry. Wet charcoal can spontaneously combust and start a fire.
- Use only recognized charcoal starter fluid. Use lighter fluid on **cold** briquettes only and use the minimum quantity necessary to start the charcoal. Adding fluid to burning or hot coals can cause a flash fire and result in serious burn injuries.
- When removing the ashes from the barbecue, make sure they are cool or put them into a non-flammable container such as a metal bucket. Water may be added to the cool ashes, remembering to stay back, away from potential hot steam. Empty spent ashes onto bare garden soil—do not put ashes into a garbage can or paper bag. House fires have been caused by hot ashes which later ignited when left on a deck or porch.

③ Gas Barbecues

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions. To check the gas cylinder or pipe for leaks, brush soapy water around all joints and watch for bubbles. If you find a leaky joint, try to tighten, but do not over tighten. If ever in doubt about the integrity of your gas cylinder, have it tested. Never use gas cylinders that are past their legal use date.
- Open the barbecue lid before turning on the gas or lighting.
- When you have finished cooking with a gas barbecue, turn off the gas cylinder.
- Change gas cylinders in the open air, not in a confined space. Avoid storing gas cylinders indoors and never in basements.



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