



Outdoor Grilling & Heating Safety

The Risk

Cooking with grills on decks and balconies of residential buildings¹ can result in fires that put the building and its occupants at risk. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) indicates an average of 8,900 grill fires occur per year in the United States.² Most fires are preventable and originate from tall flames after failing to clean the grill, placing equipment too close to combustibles, or leaving grills unattended. Gas grills have risk of leaking gas lines, and charcoal grill use can lead to careless dumping of hot charcoal. If you allow improper grill use, your organization could be liable if a fire causes injury or death.

Minimizing the Risk

Acuity considers open flame grill use on decks to be an unacceptable risk. Regardless of local codes, we recommend prohibiting grill storage and open flame cooking on decks and balconies. Consistent with most codes, you should also prohibit grill use within 10 feet of any structure.³ Outdoor heating units and fire pits should fall under the same restrictions.

The only time grills should be stored closer than 10 feet from buildings is when located on the ground level and only when completely cooled.

Additional Tips

Best practices for building owners and management:

1. Include rules and safe practices in writing with each tenant lease and/or by-laws, prohibiting use and storage on decks/balconies, allowing use on ground level only and at least 10 feet from buildings.
2. Post all rules and safe practices in each building and in areas where open-flame heating and cooking equipment may be used (in multiple languages where applicable). Circulate periodic reminders.
3. Conduct regular site visits to enforce the policies and to inspect areas where open-flame heating and cooking equipment are used.
4. Monitor areas to ensure that patio door drapes, furniture, cushions, and low hanging branches are kept clear of grills and flames.
5. Consider providing a metal bin for used charcoal and a masonry slab or designated location for grill use at least 10 feet from structures.
6. As a safer alternative to open flames, encourage the use of electric griddle style grills (not open coil style) For additional grilling safety tips, go to www.nfpa.org.

Tenant/Resident Outdoor Heating & Cooking



GRILLING

To reduce the potential for injuries and damage to building(s), please follow these rules and safe practices at all times when using open-flame heating or cooking equipment.

1. Move equipment at least **10 feet** from all buildings and combustible materials like trees, lawn furniture, and toys.
2. Do not use open-flame heating and cooking equipment on patios, decks, or balconies. Once cooled, such equipment can be stored closer than 10 feet from buildings on the ground level only; never store or use such equipment on upper levels/balconies.
3. Maintain a **3-foot safe zone** around the open-flame heating and cooking equipment area where children and pets are not allowed.
4. Clean grease or fat buildup from the equipment before and after use. Clean the drip tray before each use.
5. If using a gas unit, inspect valves and tanks for damage prior to use. Turn valves off after each use. Follow manufacturer's instructions for use and maintenance.
6. If using charcoal, ensure charcoal is wet or fully cooled before disposing in a covered metal container. Operate equipment according to the manufacturers' instructions.
7. Keep a fire extinguisher close by and tend to your equipment at all times. To extinguish a fire, shut off the gas and/or close the lid. If no cover is available, use salt, baking soda, or sand on the fire to smother the flames.
8. If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the device and **call 911**. Do not attempt to move the device.

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¹Includes one- or two-family homes, apartments, town houses, duplexes, row houses, and manufactured homes.

²Source: NFPA, Fire Analysis & Research Division, www.nfpa.org, April 2016.

³Source: NFPA 1, 2015 Edition

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