



Bexar-Bulverde Volunteer Fire Department Tip Sheet: Barbecue Grills - No use or storage on balconies



Every summer, barbecue grills re-appear on the balconies and patios of single- and multi-family dwellings for another season of outdoor cooking; however, the use and storage of solid fuel or propane cooking equipment on patios and balconies has resulted in a number of fires, deaths, and property damage in the state of Texas. In unincorporated Bexar County, there are two specific regulations that deal with the use and storage of barbecue grills in the Bexar County Rules for the Enforcement of the Internal Fire Code.

Specifically, Section 308.1.4.1 indicates that these devices may not be used within 10 feet of any combustible surface, such as deck, porch, balcony, wall, or veranda; or beneath any balcony, porch, roof overhang, deck, or veranda. Additionally, Section 603.4.2.1.1 of the 2009 International Fire Code indicates that these devices may not be stored or used inside any occupancy when connected to the fuel gas container; inside tents, canopies, and membrane structure; **or on exterior balconies.**

Because of the number of incidents and citizens' complaints that have been received, the Bexar County Fire Marshal's Office will start active enforcement of the law by issuing citations for violations of the fire code when a Deputy Fire Marshal observes a barbecue grill either stored or in use on or under a balcony or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Statistics:

- 2006-2008, US Fire Departments responded to an average of 5,700 home* fires involving grills, hibachis, or barbecues per year. These fires resulted in an annual average of 10 civilian deaths, 100 reported civilian injuries, and \$37 million in direct property damage.
- **Thirty-two percent (32%) of grill fires on residential properties start on patios, terraces, screened-in porches, or courtyards, while an additional twenty-four percent (24%) start on exterior balconies and unenclosed porches.**

*Homes include one- or two-family homes, apartments, town houses, row houses, and manufactured housing

Sources: Grill Fires on Residential Properties, US Fire Administration



Grills, hibachis, barbecues, and open flames in general on residential properties continue to be a high fire risk and, on average, result in more injuries and slightly higher dollar losses when compared to all other fires. As a result, it is critical that each household diligently practice fire safety when cooking on one of these pieces of equipment. Practicing fire safety and adhering to local regulations can prevent these fires and their resultant injuries, deaths, and property loss.

For more information on residential fire pits, please call the Bexar County Fire Marshal at (210) 335-0300