



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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Michele L. Pankow, State Fire Marshal

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Illinois State Fire Marshal Urges Grilling Safety and Fire Prevention Ahead of Memorial Day Weekend

An average of 21,682 patients per year went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills.

Springfield, Ill- Memorial Day weekend marks the unofficial start of summer and is one of the busiest times of year for outdoor cooking, campfires, and recreational travel. With increased activity comes increased risk, particularly involving grilling equipment, open flames, and portable heat sources.

"First responders are prepared for increased calls during holiday weekends, but prevention is always the best response. It's important to inspect and clean your grills before using them this summer and to check with your local community to ensure small recreational fires are allowed," said **Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow**. "We ask everyone to do their part so Memorial Day remains a safe and meaningful time of remembrance and celebration."

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), reports around 64% of U.S. households own at least one outdoor BBQ, grill or smoker. July was the peak month for grill fires, followed by June, May and August. Gas grills were involved in an average of 9,287 home fires per year, including 4,682 structure fires and 4,605 outdoor fires annually. Leaks or breaks were primarily a problem with gas grills. Six percent of gas grill structure fires and 13% of outside gas grill fires were caused by leaks or breaks based on 2019-2023 annual averages. More than one-quarter of grill structure fires started on an exterior balcony or open porch. Eight percent began when an outside wall caught fire; 3% began with some type of structural member or framing. According to data from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2020-2024, an average of 21,682 patients per year went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal advises everyone to take these steps to help ensure a safe summer filled with everyone's favorite grilled foods:

- Propane and charcoal grills should only be used outdoors
- The grill should be placed away from the home or deck railing, and out from under eaves of your home and overhanging tree branches
- Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grilling area
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill
- Never leave your grill unattended
- Always make sure gas grill lids are open before lighting it

- Check the gas tank on your propane grills and hoses for leaks each time before using
- If you smell gas while grilling, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department
- Make sure charcoal grill coals are cool before disposing of them in a metal container
- Always have a fire extinguisher, bucket of water or garden hose nearby or know where you can access one quickly

Bonfires, pit fires and campfires can also create fire safety dangers during the summer months. Campfires need to be built at least 25 feet away from tents, shrubs and anything that can burn. Make sure fires are allowed in the area that you are camping. Use of chimineas, outdoor fireplaces and fire pits need to be at least 10 feet away from your home or anything that can burn.

For more information about grilling please visit the National Fire Protection Association's website at: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Seasonal-fire-causes/Grilling>.