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## **Illinois State Fire Marshal offers recipes for fire safety around the grill during the outdoor barbeque season**

### ***Leading cause of gas grill fires was a leak or break in hoses***

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois State Fire Marshal is reminding cooks not to forget about barbeque fire safety during the peak months for outdoor cooking, especially as they hover around popular gas appliances.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), gas-fueled grills were involved in more than 80 percent of home grill fires and were involved in 6,400 home fires, including structure and outside fires. The leading cause of gas grill fires was a leak or break in hoses.

“At the beginning of grilling season, it’s important to thoroughly inspect the hoses, burners and fittings to ensure that there are no cracks, leaks or rusted sections,” said Larry Matkaitis, Acting Illinois State Fire Marshal. “If something is amiss, consider replacing the parts or it may be time for a new grill if you discover considerable corrosion. The best bet would be to contact your local hardware store if you have any questions.”

Although gas grills are used approximately one-and-a-half times more often than charcoal grills, they were involved in five times as many fires, about 6,400 from 2003-2006. Charcoal or other solid-fueled grills were involved in 1,300, or 16 percent, of home grill fires. The leading cause of these fires was something that could burn being located too close to the grill.

In 2007, approximately 9,600 people visited hospital emergency rooms because of thermal burns caused by grills. About one-third of the burns from gas grills happened when lighting. Gasoline or lighter fluid was involved in roughly one-quarter of charcoal or wood grill burns. Children under 5 accounted for roughly one-quarter of thermal grill burns. Most of these burns occurred when the child bumped or touched the grill.

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal offers the following grill safety tips:

- Use propane and charcoal grills in outdoor areas only, but there are restrictions on the use of cooking grills—regardless of fuel source—that may limit their use on balconies. Renters or property owners should check with their local fire department for more information.
- Make sure the grill is located at least 10 feet from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area: declare a 3-foot “kid-free zone” around the grill.
- Use long-handled grilling tools to give plenty of clearance from heat and flames.
- Remove grease or fat build up from the grills and in trays below the grill so it cannot ignite.
- Never leave the grill unattended.

When using gas grills:

- Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year by applying a light soap and water solution to the hose. If there is a propane leak, it will release bubbles. If you do find a leak and there is no flame, do the following:
  - Turn off the gas tank and grill.
  - If the leak stops, have the grill serviced by a professional before using it again.
  - If it does not stop, call the fire department.
- If you smell gas at any point while cooking, get away from the grill immediately and call the fire department.
- Use only equipment with the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to set up the grill and maintain it.
- Never store propane gas tanks in buildings or garages. If you store a gas grill inside during the winter, disconnect the cylinder and leave it outside.

When using charcoal grills:

- If you use a "charcoal chimney" to start charcoal for cooking, use a long match to avoid burning your fingers when lighting the paper.
- If you use starter fluid, only use charcoal starter fluid and never add charcoal fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited.
- Never use gasoline or any other flammable liquid to get the fire going.
- Keep charcoal fluid away from children and heat sources.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals cool completely before disposing of them in a metal container.

For other fire safety information, please visit OSFM's Web site at [www.state.il.us/osfm](http://www.state.il.us/osfm) or NFPA's Web site at [www.nfpa.org/grilling](http://www.nfpa.org/grilling).

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