

Safety & Environmental Services Section

Informational Bulletin

Open Flame Cooking on Balconies

Policy 08-02

In 2003- 2006, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 7,900 home fires involving grills, hibachis, or barbecues per year, including an average of 2,900 structure fires and 5,000 outside fires. These 7,900 fires caused annual average of 10 civilian deaths (to the nearest ten), 120 reported injuries and \$80 million in direct property damage.

- * Almost all the losses occurred in structure fires.
- * June and July are peak months for grill fires but these incidents occur throughout the year.

The new regulations prohibit open flame cooking (Charcoal, LPG, Natural Gas) within 10' of combustible construction on balconies of multi-family structures (3 or more units), Except when the balcony is protected by an approved automatic fire sprinkler system. Separating the open flame heat source from combustible material is essential to eliminate accidental ignition.

On balconies without the proper clearance you can consider using an electric barbeque or LP gas barbeque with a supply bottle of 1 pound or less.

The California Fire Code reads as follows:

308.3.1 Open-flame cooking devices. Charcoal burners and other open-flame cooking devices shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Exception:

1. One- and two-family dwellings
2. Where buildings, balconies and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system.

308.3.1.1 Liquefied-petroleum-gas-fueled cooking devices. LP-gas burners having an LP-gas container with a water capacity greater than 2.5 pounds [nominal 1 pound LP-gas capacity] shall not be located on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.

Exception: one- and two-family dwellings.

For more information: <http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/grillFactSheet.pdf>