



Safety & Environment Services Section Informational Bulletin

Open-flame Cooking Devices at Multi-family Residential Buildings Grills on Balconies, Decks, and Patios

In 2003–2006, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 7,900 home fires per year involving open-flame cooking devices such as grills, hibachis, or barbecues, including an average of 2,900 structure fires. These 7,900 fires caused an average of 10 civilian deaths, 120 reported injuries, and \$80 million in direct property damage annually.

- ❖ Almost all the losses occurred in structure fires.
- ❖ While June and July are peak months for grill fires, grilling incidents occur throughout the year.

Due to the number of home fires involving these types of open-flame devices, the California Fire Code prohibits open-flame cooking devices on combustible balconies, decks, and patios or within 10 feet of combustible construction of multi-family buildings consisting of three or more units. It has been proven that keeping open flame heat sources such as a grill away from combustible materials helps eliminate these fires.

On combustible balconies, decks, and patios without proper clearance, please consider using an electric grill or LP gas grill with a container capacity of less than 2.5 pounds.

California Fire Code states:

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.

Exceptions:

1. One- and two-family dwellings.
2. Where buildings, balconies, and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system.
3. LP-gas cooking devices having LP-gas container with a water capacity not greater than 2 ½ pounds [nominal 1 pound LP-gas capacity].

Multi-family residential structures located in unincorporated areas of Orange County are allowed unrestricted use of open-flame cooking devices