

# Grills & Propane Safety



Even though propane probably isn't part of your daily job, you may use propane gas for outdoor cooking or in some cases indoor as well. If we should have an accident using propane and get hurt, our work schedule would be affected just the same. The reason for propane discussion in this issue is to offer hints on protecting ourselves while we are cooking those ribs, sausages, or chicken - or all three.

Almost 90% of liquefied petroleum (LP) gas fires in the home between 1994-1998 involved ignition by some form of equipment. Obviously, the most common types are those that we are familiar with, open-fired grills, hot water heaters, and stoves. In the USA, LP gas for residential use is almost exclusively propane; however, butane is also an LP gas.

## **FACTS:**

- In 1998, there were 1,600 LP – gas fires in U.S. homes, resulting in 41 deaths, 260 injuries, and \$30.8 million in direct property damage.  
The leading cause of LP-gas fires from 1994-1998 was parts failure, leaks, or breaks.

## **FACTS FOR COOKING OUT WITH LP GAS:**

- In 2002, gas and charcoal grills caused 900 structure fires and 3,500 outdoor fires in or on home properties. This caused \$30 million in direct property losses.
- The sale of gas-fueled grills nearly tripled between 1982 and 1993 (up from 9.4 million to 27.5 million).
- Gas grills are a higher risk than charcoal because of leaks and breaks, accounting for nearly ½ of gas grill fires.

## **SAFETY TIPS: GAS GRILLS:**

- Position your grill away from siding, deck railings, and out from under eaves and overhanging limbs.
- Place it a safe distance from yard games, play areas, and walkways.
- Keep pets and children away from the immediate grill area. Make a 3-foot safe zone around the grill
- Use long-handled appliances for turning the meat, flipping the burgers, or rolling the sausages.
- Periodically, empty the fat tray to avoid the hot grill causing a flame up.
- Periodically, check the hoses for leaks or breaks. A light solution of soap and water applied to the hose will instantly show you the source of the leak by releasing little bubbles.
- Assume that your grill has a leak, noticeable by the smell of propane or evidence of the bubbly, soapy water, but there is no flame:
  - ~ Turn off the propane tank and the grill.
  - ~If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before your next use.
  - ~If the leak doesn't stop, call the fire department.
- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not attempt to move the grill.

## **OVERFILL PROTECTION DEVICES:**

- All propane cylinders manufactured since April, 2002 must have the overfill protection device (OPD). OPD's shut off the flow of propane gas before capacity is reached, limiting the potential for release if the cylinder heats up. OPD's are easily recognized by the triangular shaped hand wheel.
- Use only equipment tested and certified by an independent laboratory.