

# A p a r t m e n t

## SAFETY



## NOTES

SPOKANE FIRE DEPARTMENT

July 2012



### Grill Talk

A two-alarm fire in Kansas City in mid-June started with a barbecue on the second floor balcony. The blaze caused an estimated \$350,000 in damages and will keep 13 residents out of their units for an estimated 6-month repair.

Since July is the peak month for residential fires that are started by grills, it is a good time to review your barbecue policies with tenants.

Washington State did not adopt Section 308.1.4 of the 2009 International Fire Code that prohibited

charcoal burners or other open-flame cooking devices from being operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction unless the building, balcony and deck were protected by an automatic sprinkler system. Instead, it has been left to the discretion of building owners whether or not to include outdoor grilling precautions in their lease agreements.

One of the problems associated with grills and propane on decks above the second floor is the fact that once an exterior fire is started by any cause, the fire grows dramatically if it reaches a propane canister.

Some apartments require tenants to use grills in a specified common area that is a sufficient number of feet from the side of buildings or overhanging trees. Others will only allow electric grills or natural gas ones that get the gas directly from the building. Propane should never be stored inside a building.

Here are some safety tips from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):

- Never use a propane or charcoal BBQ grill indoors because of the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Keep grills away from deck railings, eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets at least 3 feet away from a hot grill.
- Never leave a working grill unattended.
- Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it the first time each season. Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose and look for bubbles.
- Always open the gas grill lid before lighting grill.
- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department.
- Never add charcoal lighter fluid to the fire once the charcoal is kindled.
- When finished, cool the coals completely before disposing them in a metal container away from the deck or building.



# Laundry Room Notes

Clothes dryers cause about 12,000 fires each year in the U.S. The most common problem associated with these fires is the failure to clean the vents of excess lint or blockages. Dryer fires also can happen when residents put wash into the dryer and then leave the home or go to sleep. What may start as a small fire grows totally out of control with no one close at hand to respond to the smoke alarm and contact 9-1-1.



AHAM, the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, recommends rigid sheet metal venting devices rather than flexible plastic ducts since more lint gets built up in the plastic versions and the plastic also provides additional fuel for a fire.

According to the US Fire Administration, dryer vents can't be longer than the equivalent of 25 feet, with 5 feet added to the actual vent length for each 90-degree bend in the vent. The exhaust vent should be as short as possible and have limited bends to assure good airflow. Increased drying times are one indicator that the vent is clogged.

Both AHAM and USFA recommend that a qualified service person periodically clean the interior of the dryer and the venting system. AHAM recommends a yearly inspection and USFA suggests every 2 to 3 years, depending on the usage rate of the dryer.

Here are more ways tenants can help prevent dryer fires:

- ✓ Clean the lint filter after each load.
- ✓ NEVER put items that were soiled by flammable liquids (e.g. gasoline, cooking oil or spot removers) into dryers. Line dry them outside or in a ventilated area away from heat.
- ✓ Don't use dryer for items made of foam, rubber, or plastics. Use a clothesline or air dry instead.
- ✓ Make sure an adult is alert and near the laundry whenever a dryer is in operation. Unwanted fires can happen in an instant!

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at [jdoherty@spokanefire.org](mailto:jdoherty@spokanefire.org) or by calling (509)625-7058.

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