

S A F E T Y N O T E S

July 2014



Summer evenings inspire many people to create some campfire ambience with a recreational fire in their backyard. Unless a burning restriction or ban is in effect, this is legal in the Cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley as well as the unincorporated areas of Spokane County.

However, there are a number of fire safety requirements that need to be met at all times. Some apartment complexes may have additional restrictions on the use of barbecues, chimneas, portable outdoor fireplaces or patio and deck warmers. It is important that all tenants know the outdoor fire policies for their residence.

- Have owner approval for outdoor fires in designated areas at multi-family units.
- Ensure that wind conditions are less than 7 to 10 mph.
- Confirm with www.spokanecleanair.org that the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency shows a green light for safe air quality conditions prior to lighting any recreational fire.
- Require a responsible adult to attend the fire at all times.
- Use only approved fuels, i.e. clean and dry firewood, propane, briquettes, or natural gas.
- Keep approved fire extinguishing equipment at hand and ready for use. This includes a garden hose, bucket, dirt or sand, shovel, or a 4A-rated fire extinguisher.
- Keep campfires or fire pits at least 25 feet away from combustibles and structures/buildings.
- Keep portable outdoor fireplace devices at least 15 feet from combustibles and structures.
- Equip portable units with a domed screen or other spark-arresting device.
- Extinguish any fire where the smoke presents a health hazard or nuisance to neighbors.
- Dispose ash or charcoal remnants in metal waste containers that cannot burn.



Propane Reminders

The recent explosion of a food truck in Philadelphia focused national attention on the safe use of propane barbecues.

According to the Propane Education & Research Council, the first line of inquiry should be the manufacturer's instruction booklet for the particular type of grill in use. It is also important to keep the grill on a level surface at least five feet from the house, fence, or outdoor furniture. Never grill in a garage, breezeway, carport or under a combustible overhang. Do not use grills on a wooden deck.

Use caution when purchasing or storing propane containers. Always transport the container in a secure and upright position. Never keep a filled container in a hot car or trunk. Never store a spare gas container under or near the grill. Never store gas containers indoors.

Check hoses for cracking or brittleness. Whenever you replace a cylinder, check for gas leaks by following the manufacturer's advice or by using a soapy water solution to observe whether expanding bubbles indicate leakage.

Should the flame go out while cooking, refer to your owner's manual. With propane grills, always keep the lid open and wait at least 15 minutes before relighting. This procedure can prevent significant burn injuries.

In general, there are fewer fires and injuries attributed to propane grills than to charcoal grills. However, cooks need to be aware that propane grills require some basic maintenance (e.g. remove grease from the grill and trays, inspect hoses for leaks) and constant monitoring. Advice from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for a gas leak without a flame is to immediately turn off the gas and grill. If the leak stops, have the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call 9-1-1. Do not attempt to move the grill.

It's a good idea to post the basic rules and expectations for grills and recreational fire devices so the property policy and expectations are clear to your tenants and guests.

Flowers and Ashes

Just a friendly reminder: If there are smokers in or near your buildings, you are wise to keep a sturdy ashtray or cigarette receptacle near the designated smoking areas. Otherwise you may have smokers attempt to dispose their used cigarette butts in the soil around flower planters or pots. The problem is that planting soil has organic materials such as peat moss and compost. The heat of the cigarette can begin to burn the potting soil and ignite a significant fire. In the last several years hundreds of thousands of dollars of rental property have been lost in Spokane due to cigarettes supposedly extinguished in the dirt of flower pots or gardens. What was perceived as "regular dirt" was actually potting soil that easily sustained the fire!



A cigarette receptacle will help keep cigarettes out of planters and may prevent a fire.

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 or by calling 509.625.7058.



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