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This Tip Sheet reflects code requirements of the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC) with Washington State Amendments.



According to the National Fire Protection Association,

From 2011–2015, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 9,600 home fires involving grills, hibachis, or barbecues per year. That number included an average of 4,100 structure fires and 5,500 outside or unclassified fires. These 9,600 fires caused annual averages of 10 civilian deaths, 160 reported civilian injuries, and \$133 million in direct property damage.

Unattended cooking is the leading cause of residential fires in most cities.

**The question of whether a barbeque can be used on a deck or balcony comes up frequently.**

The International Fire Code states the following:

*308.1.4 Open-flame cooking devices. Charcoal burners and other open-flame cooking devices shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet (3048 mm) 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 1/2 pounds [nominal 1-pound (0.454 kg) LP-gas capacity].*

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GENERAL INFORMATION:

- The intent of this Tip Sheet is to provide a general understanding of the code requirements and does not address the subject in great detail.

However

The State of Washington, in its code adoption process, excluded this code section from the Fire Code.

Further, the state of Washington added language to IFC 6108.1 to allow, “The use and storage of listed propane fired barbeque grills on R-2 (apartments & condominiums) decks and balconies with an approved container not exceeding a water capacity of 20 pounds (9 kg) that maintain a minimum clearance of 18 inches on all sides, unless listed for lesser clearances.”

This shows intent by Washington State law makers not to prohibit the use of gas barbeque grills on apartment decks and balconies at distances of less than 10 feet from combustible construction.

Apartment Management

Apartment policies and condominium association rules can be more restrictive than the Fire Code. Check with them before placing a barbeque for use.

City of Chelan Fire Marshal

While 10 feet of separation from combustibles remains a strong guideline, it is recognized that some outdoor cooking appliances are designed for safe use with as little as 3 feet of separation.

Bottom line

1. Make sure you aren't violating a lease agreement or rule.
2. Do not let outdoor cooking cause heating of any combustible material.
3. Never leave cooking unattended.
4. Dispose of all used charcoal in a metal container with tight fitting lid because charcoal can smolder even when you think it is cold.
5. Be a good neighbor! Don't let your outdoor cooking become a nuisance to your neighbors. If the wind is blowing toward their residence or if there is no wind, please take that into consideration before barbecuing.

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