



Celebrate the 4th of July—Safely!

Everyone enjoys waving to the firefighters in the big red fire truck leading the 4th of July parade, however no one wants to see those same firefighters responding to a fire or an injury at their home on the 4th of July. Without proper safety precautions, two traditional activities associated with the 4th of July-- barbecues and fireworks—could lead to an emergency visit to your home by the firefighters.

Grilling Safety. According to the National Fire Protection Association, in 2002, gas and charcoal grills caused 900 structure fires and 3,500 outdoor fires. Most grill home structure fires start on an outside balcony or on an unenclosed porch. Gas grills have a higher fire risk than charcoal grills; leaks and breaks cause the majority of gas grill fires. Unattended cooking and flammable materials too close to the grill cause the majority of charcoal grill home structure fires.

To prevent grill fires, practice the following safety tips.

- Use all grills outside, well clear of any combustible material such as siding, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- On gas grills, check the propane cylinder hose for leaks at least once a year. Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose and look for bubbles that indicate propane leaks. If you detect a leak, have the grill professionally serviced.
- Start charcoal grills with charcoal starter fluid or other UL approved charcoal lighting devices—never use gasoline. If the fire dies down, use dry kindling to revive it. Never add starter fluid to warm coals.
- After cooking, carefully douse charcoal with water, standing clear of steam and smoke.

Fireworks Safety. The safe and legal way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a professionally produced public display. Fireworks (defined by if it launches or explodes) are illegal in Florida, and State Fire Marshal Tom Gallagher warns residents that signing a waiver to purchase fireworks does not clear you of legal responsibility. Using fireworks illegally is a first-degree misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Even legal sparklers, with temperatures in excess of 1200 degrees, carry risk of fire or injury. If you do choose to use sparklers or other legal novelties, follow these precautions.

- Light on a flat, hard surface in an open area, not on grass. Keep young children and pets at least 30 feet away.
- Keep a water hose and bucket of water nearby for emergencies. Douse used sparklers in water before disposing of them.

For more tips on grill and fireworks safety, please call the South Trail Public Education office at 936-5281.