

Safety & Environmental Services Section

Informational Bulletin

Open Flame Cooking on Balconies

Over the past ten years there has been an increase in the number of fires caused by barbeques. NFPA statistics show barbeques sparked 8,300 fires nationwide in 2005, causing \$137 million dollars in damage. In an effort to reduce these types of fires, new regulations have been adopted for open flame cooking on balconies of multi-family dwellings.

The new regulations prohibit open flame cooking (Charcoal, LPG, Natural Gas) within 10' of combustible construction on balconies of multi-family structures (3 or more units), Except when the balcony is protected by an approved automatic fire sprinkler system. Separating the open flame heat source from combustible material is essential to eliminate accidental ignition.

On balconies without the proper clearance you can consider using an electric barbeque or LP gas barbeque with a supply bottle of 1 pound or less. The California Fire Code reads as follows:

308.3.1 Open-flame cooking devices. Charcoal burners and other open-flame cooking devices shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction¹.

Exception:

1. One- and two-family dwellings
2. Where buildings, balconies and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system.

308.3.1.1 Liquefied-petroleum-gas-fueled cooking devices. LP-gas burners having an LP-gas container with a water capacity greater than 2.5 pounds [nominal 1 pound LP-gas capacity] shall not be located on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction¹.

Exception: one- and two-family dwellings.