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## State Fire Marshal Division

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### Barbecues and Open Flames on Balconies and Patios

Every summer, barbecue grills reappear on the balconies and patios of multi-family dwellings for another season of outdoor cooking. The use and storage of solid fuel or propane cooking equipment on patios and balconies has resulted, however, in a number of fires in the state of Minnesota.

In many towns and cities, this practice is prohibited by local ordinance or by adoption of Appendix H in the 2007 Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC). The fire code does not prohibit barbecue grills on balconies and patios of multi-family occupancies unless the local governing body has formally adopted MSFC (07) Appendix H.

Here is a reprint of the text of Minnesota State Fire Code Appendix H:

#### Appendix H-Fires or Barbecues on Balconies or Patios

**1.1 Open Flame Prohibited.** In any structure containing three or more dwelling units, no person shall kindle, maintain, or cause any fire or open flame on any balcony above ground level, or on any ground floor patio within 15 feet of a structure.

**1.2 Fuel Storage Prohibited.** No person shall store or use any fuel, barbecue, torch, or other similar heating or lighting chemical or device in the locations designated in Section 1.1.

**Exception:** Listed electric or gas-fired barbecue grills that are permanently mounted and wired or plumbed to the building's gas supply or electrical system and that maintain a minimum clearance of 18 inches on all sides, unless listed for lesser clearances, may be installed on balconies and patios when approved by the chief.

An option available to local jurisdictions that have not adopted Appendix H is to encourage apartment building owners to incorporate language into their leases that prohibits barbecue grills from being used or stored on balconies and patios.

To determine if an ordinance regulating open fires on balconies or patios has been adopted where you live, contact your local fire marshal or fire department.

Barbecuing in any environment presents certain hazards that people should consider so that they can take precautions to reduce the likelihood of starting a fire. Here are a few tips that can help make barbecuing safer.

- Charcoal briquettes should be stored in a dry area because damp or wet charcoal is sensitive to spontaneous heating once dried.
- The use and storage of barbecue grills should be restricted to the outdoors. Never use barbecue grills for home heating or indoor cooking.
- Charcoal briquettes should be allowed to cool naturally a safe distance from structures and combustible materials and then disposed of properly.
- Charcoal lighter fluid should be properly stored, away from living areas of the home.
- Propane cylinders shall be stored outside at least 20 feet from building openings such as windows and doors.

If you have any questions relating to the adoption of fire code appendices or any other code issue, please contact the State Fire Marshal Division at [firecode@state.mn.us](mailto:firecode@state.mn.us), or visit our web page at [www.fire.state.mn.us](http://www.fire.state.mn.us) for the latest information on fire in Minnesota.