

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD. FIRE / EMS DEPARTMENT



TIPsheet

GUIDELINES FOR SAFE TAILGATE GRILLING



A Public Service of the "Livable Communities" Initiative. Jack B. Johnson, County Executive
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AVOID UNNECESSARY FUMBLES – Keep your grill a good six feet from vehicles and any other combustible materials. Never grill on or in your vehicle! Never use a grill that wobbles, leans, or is any way unstable. Make sure the grill is on sturdy and level ground and that its placement doesn't interfere with normal foot traffic patterns.

PRACTICE A ZONE DEFENSE - Keep children and pets away from the grill, as well as rambunctious lawn games (such as football or soccer) and guests who may have had one too many to drink.

PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL SUBSTITUTION – NEVER use anything other than approved lighter fluid to ignite a charcoal grill. If using Charcoal and Lighter Fluid, be sure to follow all manufacturers' directions on the container. Better yet, use one-step (no lighter fluid needed) briquettes and be ready to cook in about 10 minutes! If you do use lighter fluid, bring only the amount of lighter fluid you need to start your grill – that way you avoid the need to store dangerous flammable liquids inside your car or trunk while you are enjoying the game!

FALSE STARTS - NEVER transport a propane grill with the tank connected. Make sure the tank itself is in good condition and not showing signs of damage. Always transport the tank in an upright position. Check all hoses and connections for leaks before operating the grill. To light, open the lid of the grill, then turn on the gas at the tank. (Never light a gas grill with the lid closed -- you'll get a gas build-up and possible explosion.) Again, be sure to always follow the manufacturer's instructions when igniting your grill. If the grill doesn't light after a couple of clicks, turn off the burner, turn the gas off at the tank, and wait 5 or 10 minutes before attempting to light it again. If everything seems to be in order but your grill still fails to light, we suggest making other plans for dinner!

BEST DEFENSE? A GOOD OFFENSE! - Grilling is an easy cooking method, but it demands constant attention. Once you put something on the grill, stay with it until it's cooked. NEVER leave the grill unattended, even for a moment. It may be tempting to go check on a friend two aisles down and see what they are cooking, but not at the risk of setting your car on fire. The safety rules that apply for the backyard griller are even more important in the stadium parking lot, because of the density of people there.

ENCROACHMENT – Nothing can ruin your reputation as a grill jockey faster than an out-of-control fire, so make sure to keep your barbecuing equipment in top working order. In case of emergencies, make sure to have a proper-fitting lid for your grill within reach to extinguish small flare-ups. Have plenty of water on hand to douse overheated coals. It is also a good idea to have a portable fire extinguisher as part of your regular tailgating checklist! If the fire grows beyond your control, call 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY.

COVERING THE SPREAD (OF BACTERIA) - Practice food safety just like you would at home: If you can't wash your hands while in the parking lot, use antibacterial wipes before handling food and again after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish. Use separate coolers; one for beverages and prepared foods, and the other for raw meats. Bring paper plates so you can put the uncooked food on one plate, and then put the cooked food on a fresh plate. Wear disposable gloves when handling foods such as chicken that can cause contamination. Bring extra utensils so you can handle the uncooked food with one utensil, then switch to a clean one when taking the food off the grill. Both adults and children should make trip to the restroom for clean hands before eating. If that's not possible use a liberal dose of hand sanitizer. Clean up as you go - Bring an extra plastic tub with a lid for the dirty cookware and utensils. Immediately place disposable plates, glassware etc. in a plastic bag and tote to the nearest garbage bin.

GEARING UP FOR THE POST-GAME SHOW – Remember, a live grill briquette can burn for more than 12 hours. Once you have finished grilling, let your charcoal cool completely -- either let the coals burn down, or close the vents and the lid to starve the coals of oxygen – before disposing of the ashes. And of course, never place them in a paper bag or plastic garbage can. If using propane, never attach or disconnect an LP tank or fiddle with fittings while the grill is operating. If you run out of gas during a grilling session, turn off all the burners, reconnect the new tank, and light it anew. When you finish grilling, be sure to crank down the gas shut-off valve and disconnect the LP couplings before storing the grill. NEVER store a propane tank inside the vehicle – leave it outside, and place it in your vehicle when you leave the stadium lot.