



For Immediate Release

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July Peak Month for Grill Fires

Chaney Urges Grilling Safety for Fourth of July

JACKSON- Every Fourth of July, as citizens celebrate our country's freedom, more lives and property are threatened by fire than any other day of the year. Between 2004 and 2008, fire departments across the country responded to an average 7,700 home fires involving grills, hibachis or barbeques per year. These fires caused an average of 13 civilian deaths, 120 reported injuries, and \$70 million in direct property damage. And the peak month for grilling fires is July.

Combine those facts with the extreme drought conditions throughout Mississippi, and the potential for a disastrous holiday grows greatly. Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney wants to encourage all Mississippians to celebrate this Fourth of July and the summer months safely by taking extra care when grilling, especially during these volatile weather conditions.

"One spark from an errant grill or fireworks can have devastating results," Chaney said.

In 2010, in Mississippi, there were 74 reported burns/injuries reported as a result of grilling according to statistics from the State Health Department.

"The most dangerous time around a grill is when you're lighting it. Take extra care with your grill this year; celebrate the Fourth with your family, not in the emergency room," Chaney said.

Injuries involving grills sent 17,700 patients to emergency rooms in 2009. The National Fire Protection Association states that roughly one-half (1/2) of reported gas grill injuries were thermal burns incurred while lighting the grill. Gasoline or lighter fluid was a factor in roughly

one-quarter (1/4) of reported charcoal or wood burning grill burns. More than one-quarter (29%) of the home structure fires involving grills started on a courtyard, terrace, or patio.

To help keep your family safe this Fourth of July, the Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office, recommends these grilling safety tips:

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.

Charcoal grills

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
- Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.
- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

Propane grills

- Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year.
- Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. A propane leak will release bubbles. If your grill has a gas leak, and there is no flame, turn off the gas tank and grill.
- If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.

- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.

For more fire safety tips visit the State Fire Marshal page of the Mississippi Insurance Department website at: www.mid.state.ms.us.

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