



# Santa Clara Fire Department

## Division of Fire Prevention



### **FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS FOR BARBECUES ON BALCONIES, PATIOS AND DECKS OF RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCIES HAVING MORE THAN 2 DWELLING UNITS**

The adopted Fire Code contains regulations for the use and storage of barbecues on specified balconies, patios and decks of residential structures having more than two dwelling units. These include apartments, condominiums and townhouses (except for townhouses located on individual parcels).

#### **The following are the applicable sections from the Fire Code:**

**308.1.4. Open-Flame Cooking Devices.** Charcoal burners and other open-flame cooking devices shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within 10' (3,048 mm) of combustible construction.

#### **Exceptions:**

1. One- and two-family dwellings.
2. Where buildings, balconies and decks are protected by an automatic sprinkler system.
3. LP-gas cooking devices having LP-gas container with a water capacity not greater than 2-1/2 pounds [nominal 1 pound (0.454 kg) LP-gas capacity].

#### **Summary of the above code:**

**Charcoal Barbecues**—It is acceptable to store the barbecue unit on a combustible balcony (i.e., wood) but it is not acceptable to operate it on a combustible balcony or within 10' of combustible construction (which includes the surrounding walls and overhangs above). It is acceptable to operate the barbecue on a balcony if the balcony, deck, overhangs and adjacent walls are of noncombustible construction or if the buildings, balconies, decks and overhangs are protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system.

**Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG/Propane) Barbecues**—It is not acceptable to store or operate an LPG barbecue with a propane fuel container size greater than one pound on a combustible balcony or within 10' of combustible construction (which includes the surrounding walls and overhangs above). It is acceptable to operate the barbecue on a balcony if the balcony, deck, overhangs and adjacent walls are of noncombustible construction or if the buildings, balconies, decks and overhangs are protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

##### **When did these new requirements become effective?**

Initially in 2007. Effective January 1, 2010 with the adoption of the California Fire Code.

##### **Which municipalities have adopted Fire Code regulations for barbecues?**

All municipalities in Santa Clara County have adopted the Fire Code regulations for barbecues.

##### **Can electric barbecues be used on combustible balconies and decks without restriction?**

Yes.

##### **Are natural gas-fueled barbecues subject to the same regulations as LPG-fueled units?**

Yes. Natural gas-fueled barbecues are prohibited according to the regulations of Section 308.1.4 (shown above) for open-flame cooking devices.

**What types of materials are considered combustible construction and what types are considered noncombustible construction?**

Wood or vinyl siding, wood decking and fabric awnings are examples of combustible construction. For the purposes of these regulations, stucco-covered walls/ceilings, concrete or tiled floors and wood railings facing the exterior (not between units) will be considered to be noncombustible construction. Note that certain composite deck and railing materials may also be considered noncombustible for the purposes of these regulations. Check with the Fire Department for approval.

**Can I store my charcoal barbecue on my combustible balcony as long as I no longer use it?**

Yes. However, first check with your building manager/owner as there may be more restrictive rules regarding barbecues for the property.

**Can I store my LPG barbecue on my combustible balcony as long as I no longer use it?**

Yes, but only if the fuel tank is removed. However, first check with your building manager/owner as there may be more restrictive rules regarding barbecues for the property. Note that the removed fuel tank may not be stored on the balcony, within 10' of combustible construction or inside of any enclosed structure. **TANKS CANNOT BE STORED ON THE INSIDE OF A DWELLING UNIT.**

**Can I connect together (manifold) multiple smaller camp stove-size LPG containers to use in place of the larger size LPG tank to fuel my barbecue?**

No.

**Are there other restrictions I should be aware of regarding the use of propane fuel?**

Yes, if your building has more than one dwelling unit above the first floor, you must transport the LPG/propane containers to your unit via an open exterior stairway. It is not acceptable to transport propane containers greater than one pound capacity inside the common building areas, i.e., enclosed interior stairways and elevators.

**Who do I call if someone is using their barbecue in noncompliance with these regulations and I want to report it?**

Call your building manager/owner to report the incident or contact the Fire Department's Fire Prevention Office during normal business hours (Monday through Friday) to register a complaint.

**If I install a fire sprinkler on my balcony, can I use a barbecue?**

No, the entire building requires a fire sprinkler system, not just the balcony area.