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

The adopted Fire Code contains regulations for the use and storage of barbecues on specific 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 2013 California 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 feet (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 Barbeques – 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 feet of combustible construction (which includes the surrounding walls and overhangs above). It is acceptable to operate the barbeque 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 operate an LPG barbecue with a propane fuel container size greater than one pound on a combustible balcony or within 10 feet of combustible construction (which includes the

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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. Note: It is not acceptable to transport propane containers greater than one pound capacity inside the common building areas (i.e. – enclosed interior stairways, corridors and elevators).

Frequently Asked Questions:

When did these new requirements become effective?

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

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.