**Barbeque Safety**

While barbeque can be fun and relaxing, it can also be dangerous and you should have healthy respect for the accidents that can occur. The risk of fire and burns increases when barbequing, using some common sense and taking a few precautions can minimize the chances of an accident or uncontrolled fire and serious damage. Locate the barbeque away from flammable materials. Do not locate the cooker under the eaves of a structure, overhangs, porches, and other flammable structures, or trees. Never light a barbeque in your house or other enclosed space including a garage or other covered areas. Preventative Maintenance and regular cleaning will help to avert a crisis. Grease is highly flammable and will catch fire when it gets hot enough; do not allow it to build up in your cooker. It is important to control the fire in your cooker at all times regardless of the type of cooker or smoker you are using.

Burns – place your barbeque away from walkways and places where games and activities will be conducted. Keep children and pets away from the cookers and establish a safety zone. Use long handled utensils and gloves to prevent burns to your fingers, hands and arms from hot surfaces. Wear appropriate clothing and do not wear loose sleeves. Use caution to prevent splash when handling meat cooking in liquid being especially careful of and grease and liquids leaking from foiled meat. Disposable Foil pans are widely used in smoking but pose a risk of folding and spilling hot liquid. Use caution when moving or picking them up. Never leave a hot cooker unattended, and do not attempt to move a hot grille.

Wood and charcoal barbeques – Any time you are dealing with fire insure you have the tools on hand to fight a fire and be prepared to use them if necessary. It is always a good idea to have a fire extinguisher available and be familiar with its operation. Make sure your unit is on a level hard surface that will not tip over. Insure you place the unit on a nonflammable surface that will not catch fire if ignited grease leaks on it or a hot coal escapes. Once you light the fire, never leave it unattended, and assign a fire watch if you cannot supervise the barbeque. Always place your barbeque in a ventilated area that is away from structures, trees and other combustible materials. Control the fire in the barbeque at all times. If grease begins to flare excessively, a number of actions can be taken to bring the fire under control. You can remove or move the meat from the grille, or move it away from the fire, spray water on the flames with a spray water bottle, close the dampers and lid if available until the flames subside, or all of the above. Chicken and hamburgers contain a lot of fat that can ignite so be prepared to deal with flare ups when cooking them. Clean the barbeque often to remove fuel from the bottom of the cooker and cooking surfaces. Take caution when disposing of ash and make sure it has cooled properly. In windy conditions take precautions to prevent embers from escaping and being carried onto flammable materials. Only use appropriate starters, like jell or lighter fluid. Never use gasoline or other inappropriate fuels to light the fire. Never add additional starter fluid to hot coals or coals that have been lit.

Gas and propane barbeques – The most precaution you can take with a gas grille is to read and follow the instructions in the operator’s manual and be familiar with your unit and its safety features. Most barbeque fires and mishaps happen when lighting a propane cooker. Before you light the fire, Inspect the fuel tank for leaks and check to see that gas is not escaping. If you detect a leak in hoses or burners, seal the tank and do not light the unit. Inspect the cooker before each use to insure the hoses and burners are in good condition and not derogated, if they are, replace them. I never light my gas grille with the lid closed, and if the unit does not light immediately, I shut the gas off and let the unit vent prior to reattempting to light. If you light the fire and detect a gas leak, clear the area and call the fire department. Regular cleaning will prevent grease buildup and help prevent excessive fire in the unit. If grease begins to burn uncontrollably in the unit, shut off the gas and take actions to control the fire prior to proceeding.

Take a few moments to think about safety before you light your barbeque, and enjoy your barbeque.

Chuck