



BBQ Grills in Multi-Family Buildings



Can I have a barbecue grill at my apartment or condominium?

The answer is **only if it is an electric powered grill**. Propane, charcoal or other fuels are strictly prohibited.

When did the rules change?

The use of propane grills, gas grills and/or charcoal grills on combustible balconies is strictly prohibited by the *International Fire Code* and has been a part of that code since the 2003 edition. Additionally, such a prohibition has typically been banned by jurisdictions for many years prior to that. Unfortunately, these rules



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were not being adhered to by property management firms and were not being enforced by the municipality or county.

Where specifically is the prohibition written?

The currently applicable code is listed under the ***International Fire Code, 2018 Edition Section 308.1.4 Open-Flame Cooking Devices:***

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 (3048 mm) of combustible construction.

Exceptions:

1. One- and two-family *dwelling*s.
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 2¹/₂ pounds [nominal 1 pound (0.454 kg) LP-gas capacity].

When does this prohibition take effect?

It has been in effect for over 2 decades in our District. We have identified that we will prevent issuing new occupancies in any multi-family building where we find an open flame grill on the balcony of that individual unit immediately and on the grill of any unit in the same building after Labor Day 2016. The complex may elect to be in full compliance prior to that.

I live in a single family home. Can I have a barbecue grill or gas grill?

Yes. The code does not apply to one and two family dwellings (homes and villas).

I was told that the fire department just passed this rule prohibiting all grills. Is that true?



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No. The West County EMS & Fire Protection District, along with thousands of other agencies across the world, have had a long-standing code prohibiting the use of propane grills, gas grills and charcoal grills on combustible porches or within 10 feet of any combustible building.

I was told that West County EMS & Fire Protection District will confiscate my grill. Is that true?

No. The enforcement mechanism on the prohibition on grills is that a new tenant will not be granted occupancy in any building where an open flame grill is located on a combustible balcony. The District does not confiscate private property.

I was told that the West County EMS & Fire Protection District will fine me if they find me using a grill. Is that true?

No. The enforcement mechanism on the prohibition on grills is that a new tenant will not be granted occupancy in any building where an open flame grill is located on a combustible balcony. The District does not fine individuals nor will they issue a fine to the building owner or manager when a grill is found.

Why are grills prohibited? Isn't barbecuing part of summer?

Cooking fires account for roughly half of the fires nationwide in multi-family buildings (apartments and condominiums) and of those, over one quarter were caused by barbecue grills on the patio or balcony. The improper or careless use of any open-flame cooking device in a multi-family



building can have disastrous consequences to multiple families. When fires occur as a result of improper or careless grilling, they typically happen when the grills



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are left unattended while cooking or when embers from a fire fall down and ignite combustible surfaces sometimes hours after the cooking is done. Unattended fires spread rapidly, placing property and lives in peril.

Why did I receive a letter stating that a rule was just passed April 1?

Based solely on a marked increase in fires and fire code violations found in multi-tenant buildings in our district, and in an effort to prevent fires in multi-family buildings, the West County EMS & Fire Protection District initiated an Occupancy Inspection program on January 4, 2016 to be effective on April 1, 2016 for all new tenants in multi-family apartment buildings. As part of this inspection for new occupants, the property management entities for all 3000+ apartment units in our District were notified of the inspection process and what we would be looking for. Barbecue grills on combustible balconies was identified as one of the code violations that would be enforced.

Why is West County EMS & Fire Protection District inspecting apartment buildings? Isn't there already enough oversight?

Our District was one of the only fire authorities in the metropolitan area that did not inspect multi-tenant buildings. Although the buildings were presumed to have been inspected by the municipality and/or St. Louis County, unfortunately a number of significant fire code violations that affect life safety have been found and the experience of those has been increasing over the last several years. It is our obligation to ensure that all commercial buildings are safe to occupy, including multi-family apartment buildings.

Isn't this all just a money grab?

No. Our apartment inspection fee solely covers the cost of scheduling, tracking and performing the inspection. There are no fines for violations found.