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PRESS RELEASE

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June 2, 2011

The Middletown Fire Department is reminding the public to use safe grilling practices as the peak months for grilling fires approach. Gas grills constitute a higher risk, having been involved in an annual average of 6,200 home fires in 2004-2008, while charcoal or other solid-fueled grills were involved in an annual average of 1,300 home fires.

"Summer barbecues can be a great time, but nobody wants to see a fun backyard event spoiled by fire," said Fire Marshal Albert Santostefano. "There are many simple measures you can take to prevent damage to property, injury, and death related to grilling fires."

In 2009, roughly 17,700 patients went to emergency rooms because of injuries incurred by grill usage. Of about 9,400 thermal burns, children under five made up about one-quarter. These mostly occurred when children touched or bumped the grill.

For gas grill injuries, about a third were burns that stemmed from lighting the grill, while gasoline or lighter fluid was a factor in about a quarter of charcoal or wood burning grill burns.

The Middletown Fire Department offers the following grilling safety tips:

- ★ Only use propane and charcoal grills outside of the home – never use them indoors.
- ★ Make sure the grill is positioned well away from the home and/or deck railings, and that it is not underneath any eaves or overhanging branches. It should also be far from any lawn games, play areas, or foot traffic.
- ★ Establish a child-and pet-free zone around the grill of at least three feet.
- ★ Use grilling tools that have long handles, which will allow more clearance from the flames.
- ★ Remember to clean fat and grease off the grill and from trays underneath it regularly in order to reduce the risk of it igniting.
- ★ Never leave the grill unattended.

Gas Grills:

- ★ Before using the grill for the first time each year, check the gas tank hose for leaks. To do this, apply a light soap and water solution to the hose and turn the tank on. If the hose releases bubbles, this indicates a propane leak. If you find a leak:
 - Turn the gas tank off.
 - If the leak stops, bring your grill to a professional to be serviced before further use.
 - If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.
- ★ If you smell gas while using the grill, get away from the grill immediately and call the fire department.

- ★ Do not store propane tanks indoors in houses or garages. If storing your grill indoors during winter months, disconnect the cylinder and leave it outside.
- ★ Only use equipment bearing the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Use the manufacturer's instructions regarding assembly, use, and proper care of the grill.

Charcoal Grills:

- ★ If using a "charcoal chimney" to light charcoal for grilling, use a long match to avoid burning your fingers while lighting the paper.
- ★ Never add starter fluid to coals or kindling that have already been ignited – and use only charcoal starter fluid. Never use gasoline or any other flammable liquid.
- ★ Keep charcoal fluid away from heat sources and out of reach of children.
- ★ When finished grilling, wait for the coals to cool completely, and then dispose of them in a metal container.

The Middletown Fire Department