



Coffee Break Training - Fire Protection Series

Inspection Techniques: Open Flames Devices on Balconies

No. FP-2010-51 December 21, 2010

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to identify the requirements for open flame devices on balconies and decks.

Unattended or improperly used charcoal-fueled barbecues are responsible for numerous fires in single and multiple-family dwellings. Fires may be caused by hot briquettes that are spilled over, from application of starter fluid, or flames from greasy foods that ignite nearby combustible materials.

The fire code official's authority to prohibit charcoal burners or other open flame devices on decks and balconies varies depending upon which model fire code is adopted within a jurisdiction.



This charcoal-fueled barbecue should be prohibited from this combustible balcony. Photo courtesy Keith Heckler, Rockville Fire Department, Maryland.

In the *International Fire Code*[®], charcoal burners and other open-flame devices may not be operated on **combustible** balconies or within 10 ft (3,048 mm) of combustible construction. Exceptions are permitted for one- and two-family dwellings and where buildings, balconies, and decks are sprinklered.

NFPA 1, *Uniform Fire Code*[™], reads slightly differently. It says “for other than one- and two-family dwellings, no hibachi, grill, or other similar devices used for cooking, heating, or any other purpose shall be used or kindled on any balcony, under any overhanging portion, or within 10 ft (3,048 mm) of any structure.” NFPA 1 contains no reference to combustible construction or buildings and decks protected by automatic sprinklers.

The *International Fire Code*[®] also limits the size of liquefied petroleum (LP) gas burners near combustible construction. Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) burner having an LP gas container with a water capacity more than 2.5 pounds (nominal 1 pound (0.454 kg) LP gas capacity) may not be located on combustible balconies or within 10 ft of combustible construction. The *International Fire Code*[®] provides an exception for one- and two-family dwellings.

For additional information, refer to *International Fire Code*[®], Chapter 3, or NFPA 1, Chapter 10.



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