

## *Safety Tip of the Month: October*

### **GAS GRILL HIBERNATION**

#### **Grill Storage Tips for Winter**

While many Americans continue to use their grills year-round, dropping temperatures sometimes mean the end of the barbecue season and time to store the grill for the cold winter months ahead. Gas grills are easy to use and are more environmentally friendly than charcoal, but before they are put away for the winter, they require some special care.

The National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) offers these maintenance tips for winter-proofing your gas grill. The supplies necessary for cleaning your grill include warm, soapy water, a brass-bristle brush, a soft cloth, toothpicks, sandpaper, and the owner's manual. It takes about an hour to thoroughly clean your grill, but come spring you'll appreciate the ease with which you can start grilling again.

#### **Step One:**

Clean the briquettes and cooking grids. With repeated use, briquettes and cooking grids become coated with grease. To clean the briquettes, flip them over so the greasy side faces the burner and place the cooking grids in the usual place. Light the grill, close the lid and set the flame on 'high' for 15 minutes. The heat will burn the grease off the briquettes and grids.

When the barbecue grill cools, remove the grids and briquettes. Using a brass-bristle brush and warm, soapy water, scrub the grids clean of any remaining grease, rinse and towel dry. Set the briquettes and grids aside.

#### **Step Two:**

Clean the burner and tubes. Greasy food drippings can clog the burner's gas ports and short out the igniter's flame. During the winter, spiders and other insects often hide in the gas tubes (also referred to as venturi tubes in your owner's manual). These problems can make the grill difficult to start and cause an uneven flame when you relight the grill in the spring, so it is important to keep these vital components clean.

Begin by making sure the gas is turned off at the tank. Following the instructions in your owner's manual, unfasten the burner, slip the venturi tubes off the gas lines and remove the unit as a whole. Clean off any dirt or grease accumulation on the unit using the soft cloth and soapy water. Towel dry the unit and then clear out each gas port on the burner unit with a toothpick. Clean the venturi tubes with warm, soapy water and then set the entire assembly aside.

#### **Step Three:**

Clean the grill housing. To prevent grease buildup and check for corrosion, clean the inside and outside of the grill housing. Before you start, cover the gas orifices beneath the control panel with aluminum foil to keep water from causing corrosion. Scrub the inner and outer surfaces of the grill with a brass-bristle brush and soapy water. Rinse the grill thoroughly with a garden hose and towel dry, remembering to remove the aluminum foil.

Take a good look at the paint for any chips or scrapes. Most grills are made of cast aluminum and will not rust. Moisture can corrode and weaken them, however, if paint chips are not caught and repaired. Sand the scraped or chipped paint until the metal beneath is white and shiny. While the grill is cold, use a primer and then touch up with paint made for high-heat applications. Once the paint is dry, reattach the burner, venturi tubes and igniter. Then put the briquettes and cooking grids back in place.

**Step Four:**

Check the fuel supply system. Although propane tanks will last as long as your grill, dented or seriously rusted tanks must be replaced immediately. Minor tank corrosion can be fixed in the same way as the grill housing.

**Step Five:**

Determine the grill's storage location. For a stationary grill that will be left outside for the winter, the propane tank is kept connected in its customary position with a protective cover over the whole grill. If the grill is stored indoors, the tank must be disconnected and left outside in an upright position.

There are three types of connection devices currently in use:

- A POL fitting, which uses rubber O-rings and requires a POL plug in the valve opening;
- A quick connect (Type 1), which has large threads on the outside of the valve and a large plastic coupling nut that screws onto the valve threads;
- A quick disconnect (Type 2), which uses a spring-loaded sleeve on the valve.

Consult the manufacturer's instructions for the proper way to disconnect your tank.

Covering the gas line openings on the grill with a plastic bag taped over the ends will keep insects out. Store the tank in a shady location away from dryer and furnace vents and away from children's play areas. Never store the tank in the garage, house, basement or any other enclosed space.