



Be Aware Of Risks Associated With Barbecues on Balconies

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The Penticton Fire Department is reminding residents of the risks associated with barbecues on balconies.

“The Penticton Fire Department recommends that building owners and strata complexes prohibit the use of heat producing appliances including barbecues on balconies, due to the potential risks,” said Fire Chief Wayne Williams. “We have had examples in Penticton and to the north of us of heat producing appliances that caused devastating fires in apartment complexes. The risks are high, because these types of fires can often leave many people homeless.”

Studies have shown that balcony fires are statistically significant, take longer to detect, involve greater suppression efforts and cause more damage than fires that start within a building. Aggravating factors include lack of fire detection or sprinklers on balconies and storage of combustible material.

The B.C. Gas Safety Act and B.C. Fire Code do not regulate or prohibit the use of barbecues on balconies; they only prohibit the storage of propane cylinders within a building or on exterior balconies.

There are many condominium and strata complexes that do not restrict the use of barbecues on balconies or may not have even considered the issue. At minimum, they should be aware of safety standards that are outlined in the B.C. Gas Act, the B.C. Fire Code and NFPA. These outline safe distance allowances from building openings and air intake and which cooking devices are recommended. They also outline how flammable and combustible liquids should not be stored on exterior balconies.

Individual residents should review their condominium or strata bylaws and rules around barbecues on balconies. If they are permitted, residents are advised to review their insurance policies to ensure the fire damage caused by barbecue use on balconies is covered.

In the absence of a condo rule or strata bylaw banning barbecue use on balconies, condominium and strata complexes can minimize the risks by prohibiting propane-fuelled barbecues