



# THE EHS CONNECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER—JULY 2016

## PACK AND TRANSPORT FOOD SAFELY

**KEEP YOUR FOOD SAFE: FROM THE REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER ALL THE WAY TO THE PICNIC TABLE.**

Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be stored at 40°F or below to prevent bacterial growth. Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while still frozen so that they stay colder longer.

Organize cooler contents. Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another. That way, as picnickers open and reopen the beverage cooler to replenish their drinks, the perishable foods won't be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures.

Keep coolers closed. Once at the picnic site, limit the number of times the cooler is opened as much as you can. This helps to keep the contents cold longer.

Don't cross-contaminate. Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.

Clean your produce. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before packing them in the cooler - including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skinned fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water. Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel.

Packaged fruits and vegetables that are labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" need not be washed.

### **QUICK TIPS FOR PICNIC SITE PREP**

Food safety begins with proper hand cleaning — including outdoor settings. Before you begin setting out your picnic feast, make sure hands and surfaces are clean.

**Outdoor Hand Cleaning:** If you don't have access to running water, simply use a water jug, some soap, and paper towels. Or, consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.

**Utensils and Serving Dishes:** Take care to keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.

### **FOLLOW SAFE GRILLING TIPS**

Grilling and picnicking often go hand-in-hand. And just as with cooking indoors, there are important guidelines that should be followed to ensure that your grilled food reaches the table safely.

**Marinate safely.** Marinate foods in the refrigerator - never on the kitchen counter or outdoors. In addition, if you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Don't reuse marinade.

**Cook immediately after "partial cooking."** If you partially cook food to reduce grilling time, do so immediately before the food goes on the hot grill.

**Cook food thoroughly.** When it's time to cook the food, have your food thermometer ready. Always use it to be sure your food is cooked thoroughly.

**Keep "ready" food hot.** Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals. This keeps it hot but prevents overcooking.

**Don't reuse platters or utensils.** Using the same platter or utensils that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood allows bacteria from the raw food's juices to spread to the cooked food. Instead, have a clean platter and utensils ready at grill-side to serve your food.

**Check for foreign objects in food.** If you clean your grill using a bristle brush, check to make sure that no detached bristles have made their way into grilled food.

# COMPOSTING 101



## WHY COMPOST?

Finished compost is a free soil amendment and fertilizer for the garden. It is mild and won't burn plants like chemical fertilizers. By adding compost you'll improve the overall texture of your soil enabling it to retain and drain water better.

## COMPOST BINS AS PETS.

Think of your compost bin as a pet. This will do two things: it will help you see it as a living thing that shouldn't be neglected, and teach you to 'feed' it a balanced diet.

There are two main types of organic materials you can feed your compost bin: greens and browns. Greens are high in nitrogen and described as 'wet.' Browns are described as 'dry' materials and are high in carbon.

When feeding your compost bin try to maintain a balance of 50% greens and 50% browns by weight. Since greens are typically heavier, you should add 2 to 3 buckets of browns for every bucket of greens you add.

## GREEN MATERIALS TO COMPOST.

Vegetable and fruit scraps. Coffee grounds and filters. Tea bags and leaves. Fresh grass clippings. Plant trimmings from your garden. Houseplants.

## BROWN MATERIALS TO COMPOST.

Dry leaves. Straw and dry hay. Woodchips and sawdust from untreated wood. Dried grass clippings, shredded paper. Egg and nut shells. Hair and animal fur. Paper, shredded newspaper, paper towels, and paper tubes.

## DO NOT COMPOST!

Meat. Fish. Eggs. Dairy products. Oily foods or grease. Bones. Cat and dog waste. Diseased plants and seeds of weedy plants. Anything treated with pesticides.

## COMPOSTING TIPS.

Chop your materials into small pieces, which will break down faster. Always cover your layer of green material with a layer of brown material to cut down on flies and mask any odors. If you want fine compost, run over it with a mulching lawn mower. When composting whole plants remove seed heads and seed pods. If possible avoid adding roots of plants to your compost pile that could generate a whole new plant.

# PORTABLE GRILLS

For most of us, cooking outdoors is one of the great pastimes during the warmer months, and with America's greatest grilling holidays in the spring and summer-time this adds up to a lot of wonderfully prepared meals at home and on the road. No matter what outdoor event you organize this year - a camping trip, cookout in the backyard, tailgating at a baseball game, beach party, or picnic in the park -- grilling will likely play a major role in the festivities. While gas grills come with their own set of fire safety guidelines and recommendations, hibachis and other small portable grills that require charcoal - and are often used away from the home - include a separate set of fire safety considerations. According to the most recent statistics from National Fire Protection Association, U.S. fire departments responded to an annual average of 3,900 home structure fires and 5,100 outside or unclassified fires involving grills, hibachis or barbecues. Five percent of grill fires occurred on a lawn, field or open area. In 2014, nearly 17,000 people went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills; more than half of these injuries were the result of burns. But don't let these numbers put a damper on your summer outing: preventing portable grill fires is not as hard or as scary as you may think. Follow these simple safety tips when using your portable grill:



## TO START CHARCOAL FOR COOKING:

- If you use lighter fluid, use only fluid intended for charcoal grills.
- Never add charcoal starter fluid to coals or kindling that has already been ignited.
- Never use gasoline or any other flammable liquid except charcoal starter or lighter fluid to start a charcoal fire.

## TO ENSURE FIRE SAFETY WHILE COOKING:

- Keep children and pets, and anything that can burn like food wrappers, an oven mitt or towel, at least three feet away from open flames and the grill.
- Have an adult present at all times when a campfire or grill is burning. Keep the fire small and never leave a fire unattended!
- Place the grill well away from any building or overhanging branches

## TO DISPOSE OF CHARCOAL AFTER COOKING:

- Douse the fire with water and make sure the area is cool to the touch before going to sleep or leaving the area.
- Empty the coals into a metal container with a tight-fitting lid that is used only to collect coals.
- Place the container outside and away from anything that can burn.
- Never empty coals directly into a trash can

For fire safety reasons, some areas have restrictions regarding campfires and grills, so before you head out to the nearest campground, park or beach, check if your area has any fire restrictions in place, and choose only those areas where fires are permitted. It's also important to know the fire danger rating to determine if weather, or other factors make it dangerous to light a fire. If the rating is high, opt for foods that don't require cooking.

For more information and resources about portable grills and fire safety, check out [cooking away from home](#) from the NFPA -- and enjoy happy and safe travels this summer!

# FIREWORKS

Permanent scarring, loss of vision, dismemberment - these are too often the harsh realities of amateur fireworks use. To keep the public safe from fireworks-related injuries and deaths, the non-profit NFPA urges everyone to treat fireworks, whether legal or illegal for consumers, as suitable only for use by trained professionals. According to NFPA, amateur fireworks use endangers not only the users, but also bystanders and surrounding property and structures. Pyrotechnic devices ranging from sparklers to aerial rockets cause thousands of fires and serious injuries each year.



"Safe and sane fireworks don't exist," Judy Comoletti, NFPA's Division Manager of Public Education. "When things go wrong with fireworks, they go very wrong, very fast, far faster than any fire protection provisions can reliably respond."

In recent years, fireworks have been one of the leading causes of injuries serious enough to require hospital emergency room treatment. Fireworks can result in severe burns, fractures, or scars or even death or disfigurement that can last a lifetime. The thousands of serious injuries each year typically harm the eyes, head, or hands, and are mostly reported in states where fireworks are legal. Even sparklers, which are considered by many to be harmless, reach temperatures of more than 1,000° F.

"Fireworks are dangerous and unpredictable, especially in the hands of amateurs," says Comoletti. "The few seconds of pleasure those fireworks may bring are not worth the risk of injury, permanent scarring, or even death."

Wooded areas, homes, and even automobiles have become engulfed in flames because of fireworks. Fireworks-related fires have typically caused at least \$20 million in property loss (not adjusted for inflation) each year in recent years. A substantial portion of the structure fire property loss due to fireworks typically involves bottle rockets or other fireworks rockets. These rockets can land on rooftops or wedge within certain structures and still retain enough heat to cause a fire.

"For most people, their family and their home represent the hard work of a lifetime and their hopes for the future," says Comoletti. "No one would risk losing what's most important to them if they understood the dangers of fireworks. There are safer alternatives to using fireworks on the Fourth of July."

Public fireworks displays are one of those alternatives. Conducted by trained professionals, these displays are the smartest and safest fireworks alternative for anyone because they are established under controlled settings and regulations. After these displays, or any other time, children should never pick up fireworks that may be left over. Fireworks that have been ignited and fail to immediately explode or discharge can cause injury because they may still be active. Children should always tell an adult if they find fireworks rather than picking up smoking or charred fireworks themselves, which is just too risky.

*From NFPA*

**ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENT:** CHRISTINE BODY HAS BEEN DOING ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENTS SINCE 1996 AND IS AVAILABLE TO DO THEM HERE ON CAMPUS. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT 312-2770 AND WOULD BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR ISSUES.



## JULY WORD SEARCH

For a chance to win a great prize (more like an OK prize, but-hey, it's a PRIZE!), complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to [lisa.drake@oswego.edu](mailto:lisa.drake@oswego.edu) OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for June was Meghan Come! Look for: Refrigerator, Freezer, Picnic, Cooler, Frozen, Bacterial Growth, Perishable, Cross Contaminate, Vegetable Brush, Food Safety, Hand Cleaning, Cook Thoroughly, Thermometer, Bristles, Composting, Fertilizer, Organic, Greens, Browns, Fireworks, Amateur, Injuries, Death, Dangerous, Scarring, Loss of Vision

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**LOUD AND CROWDED FIREWORKS DISPLAYS ARE NO FUN FOR PETS!** They can become frightened or disoriented by the sound. Please resist the urge to take them to Independence Day festivities, and opt instead to keep them safe from the noise in a quiet, sheltered and escape-proof area at home.