



NEWS RELEASE

Date: July 25, 2008
Release Date: Immediately
Contact: Karen Eubanks, Public Information Officer, 503-441-9324 (pager)

(Propane Barbecue Starts Beaverton Four-Plex Fire)

A fire investigator has determined that the most probable cause of yesterday's two-alarm fire in a Beaverton Four-Plex was a propane barbecue. According to the occupants in an upstairs unit, they had recently filled their propane tank and reconnected it to their barbecue on the back deck without inspecting the hose connections or fittings to ensure there was no leak. The occupants told investigators they were heating a pan of water on the barbecue when one of the occupants heard an explosion and then noticed the back deck on fire.

Fire investigators believe that gas leaking from the propane barbecue built-up upon the upstairs deck, which was completely enclosed with plywood. TVF&R Fire Investigator Ed Bonollo states, "Witness statements coupled with physical evidence at the scene, leads us to believe that the build-up of gas eventually came into contact with the open flame of the barbecue and ignited, causing a fire ball that quickly spread to the wooden deck and building." When fire crews arrived within four minutes they found a wall of fire on the backside of building and fire already in the attic of the building.

The building is valued at approximately \$390,000 and believed to be a complete loss. Estimated damage to the building and tenants' contents is expected to be at least \$500,000. Thirteen tenants were displaced by the fire; one of which had renters insurance.

TVF&R offers the following safety tips when using a propane barbecue:

- Before firing up, place your grill away from your home and out from underneath a patio overhang in case of fire.
- Inspect the hoses and fittings on your propane grill anytime you change the propane tank. If you smell gas or hear a hissing sound, immediately turn off the barbecue. You can also spray soapy water on the connections and supply lines; if it bubbles, there's a leak. Turn off the tank, re-connect the lines, and check again to ensure a tight fit.
- Only open the propane tank a quarter to one-half turn. That is all the gas a barbecue needs to operate, and if you have an emergency, it can be shut off more quickly.
- To avoid the build-up of explosive vapors, always open the lid of your propane barbecue before lighting. If your barbecue doesn't fire up the first time you try it, shut it off, and wait five minutes so the vapors can dissipate.
- Always keep a close eye on what you're barbecuing.

###