



More Important Tips for Keeping Your Family Safe This Summer

By Carolyn Nicolaysen · June 26, 2018

The following is part two in a short series.

You may be wondering why we are discussing summer safety and fun in a column that is devoted to self-reliance. That's why. We are not only concerned about emergency preparedness and response but also becoming self-reliant, capable of taking care of our family, under all circumstances. When planning for summer activities, prevention is the best plan for keeping family safe.

We have discussed the dangers of heat and sun it's time to examine our activities and how to keep safe while having eating and playing.

Most families will head outdoors for meals soon. Now is the time to prepare so your cookouts remain safe for all.

Grill Safety, propane and gas grills: *(the terms gas grill and propane are used interchangeably in this article)*

Read and follow all the instructions that come with your grill. Be sure to keep the instructions for future reference.

Open the lid before hitting the ignition switch or lighting a grill. Gas can build up inside the grill if the lid is closed and cause an explosion.

When using a gas grill keep the lid of the grill open until you are sure the flame has been lit.

Be sure the flame will remain burning and not be blown out by the wind or because of improper lighting before closing the lid.

Turn off the propane after every use.

Store propane tanks outside of your home and garage and in a vertical position, not laying on its side.

If you smell gas after the initial lighting of the grill, close the lid, turn off the grill at the propane valve or gas supply, and if you still smell gas move away from the grill and call 911.

Do not restart the grill without having a qualified repairman take a look.

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Use soapy water, a 50/50, mixture of water and dish detergent, to check for gas leaks in a propane tank, valve and hoses when you are using them for the first time each season or when you smell propane. “Wash” the tank, hoses and valve by spraying soapy water on them and if it bubbles up you have a leak.

Never...Use a match or lighter to check for leaks. This can not only be dangerous but deadly.

Never...Use, store, or transport propane tanks in high temperature situations. Do not transport in an enclosed cargo trailer. Do not store in a shed or outbuilding which is not cooled and or insulated.

Charcoal grills:

Never...Pour lighter fluid on a grill or on charcoal that is already lit. Also, never use a flammable liquid such as gasoline that is not designed for lighting charcoal.

Do not discard charcoal in trash. Use water to extinguish charcoal completely before disposing of it.

All grills:

Keep a garden hose and a squirt bottle filled with water for use if there is a small flare-up (squirt bottle) or major flameout (hose).

Never...Smoke while handling a propane tank or lighting a grill just in case there is an undetected leak or the tank was not turned off completely. If using charcoal and lighter fluid, remember both can ignite from a lighter or match sparks or ash.

Place your grill at least eight feet from your home. A grill can flare up and cause damage, or worse, to your home or family members.

Place all grills away from flammable materials such as outdoor curtains, towels and potholders.

Food Safety

Then there is the food. Don't just use the following tips when camping or on the lake but whenever you eat outdoors, even at home.

Food is safe to keep in the heat for only an hour. Keep food in a cooler with ice and return the food to the cooler as you finish eating. When you need seconds later, just raid the cooler.

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Keep drinks in a separate cooler or a bucket filled with ice. If you keep food and drinks in the same cooler the food in the cooler may become dangerous to eat. Opening coolers often, and drinks are consumed much more often than food during hot weather, reduces the cooling effect.

Remember as with your freezer, a full cooler will maintain its cold temperature longer than a partially filled one.

When using a cooler, keep it out of the direct sun by placing it in the shade or under a shelter.

After cooking meat and poultry on the grill, keep it hot until served, 140 °F or warmer.

When grilling - keep meat safe by cooking to a safe temperature. 145 degrees for beef, pork, lamb, & veal (steaks, roasts, and chops), 160 degrees for ground meats other than poultry, and 165 degrees for poultry whether whole, cut up or ground.

Never reuse a marinade. If you want marinade to baste meat while grilling make a double batch and set half aside for use later.

Store raw and cooked meats, separately.

Finally, be sure to wash hands often.

Water Safety

Summer is the season for swimming and boating. Stay safe by:

When swimming in a pool keep awareness of electrical hazards around water. Do not plug in a radio or appliance near the pool. Keep cords and electrical devices away from pools.

Teach children not to touch an electrical appliance while wet.

Use outlet covers on outdoor receptacles especially near swimming pools. Keep cords and electrical devices away from pools.

Do not string outdoor lights over the pool.

Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electrocutions and shock injuries. Portable GFCIs requires no tools to install and may be purchase for \$15 to \$30.

When choosing a flotation device for children, choose a child-size life vest over water wings or a swim ring. Little bodies are more secure and safe in a vest.

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Sailboats often have tall masts which are dangerous when they come into contact with overhead power lines. Navigate at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines.

Time at the beach and in the ocean can create amazing memories but shark attacks have increased. Take precautions to be safer. To decrease chance of becoming a victim:

Watch for signs on the beach indicating sharks have been seen in the area. Stay out of the water.

Sharks love sand bars so stay away from them.

Always swim in a group. Sharks don't like crowds.

Don't get too far from shore. Not only can this isolate you from assistance, but may also find you trapped in a riptide.*

Avoid swimming at night, dawn, or dusk when sharks are most active.

Never swim if bleeding. Sharks are able to trace blood back to its source.

Never wear shiny jewelry or jewels on your swimsuit. The reflection from bling looks like fish scales to a shark.

Wear dark colored swimsuits. Bright colors, especially yellow, attract sharks.

Don't go into waters containing sewage, that should be a no brainer, or water being fished. Small fish attracted to sewage or used for fishing bait attracts sharks.

Don't try to touch a shark if you see one!

If you are attacked try to hit the shark in the eye or fin. These areas are much more sensitive than the nose.

Summer is a fun family time. Prepare now for a safe summer making happy memories.

*Rip tide safety: Exit shallow water if you feel a rip current, remain calm, call for help, swim parallel to shore to escape the current, conserve energy, and swim diagonally toward the shore.