

Charcoal BBQs or grills

Charcoal barbecue (BBQ) and grills use charcoal briquettes or lump charcoal as fuel to cook food. Follow the guidance below to keep people and property safe.

Before you light your fire

Other agency requirements - Check council websites for air quality rules, smoke nuisance guidelines and whether this activity is permitted on any public land including beaches. Charcoal BBQs are **not permitted** on Public Conservation Lands.



Weather - Only light your fire when there is little or no wind forecast. Move your BBQ or grill to a sheltered place, if required.

Smoke - Place your BBQ so that smoke won't impact others.

Establish a safety zone - Put your BBQ on a stable, level, non-flammable surface such as a metal tray, gravel, concrete or dirt. Keep your BBQ more than three metres from buildings and anything else that could catch alight and burn, e.g. plants, grasses, or branches. Don't use them on decks or in enclosed areas, e.g. on a balcony, roof overhang.

Extinguish - Keep a garden hose that is turned on and ready to go or buckets of water for other fires.

Don't light your BBQ if you have any doubts that it is safe.

When your fire is lit

Lighting your fire - Make sure you only use charcoal starter fluid. **Never** use accelerants such as petrol or kerosene because the vapours can explode.

Fuel - Make sure the you only burn charcoal briquettes or lump charcoal. Have enough to cover the base of the BBQ or grill to a depth of about 5 cm

Fire control - Wait for the flames to die down before cooking. Coals should be covered with grey ash and they are too hot to hold your hand over them. This reduces the risk of flare-ups and potential for unplanned fires. Don't move the BBQ while it's lit.

Supervise - Ensure someone stays with the BBQ until it's put out. Have a 'no go zone' to keep children and pets safe.

Weather - If a change to the wind direction or speed makes your BBQ unsafe — put it out.

Be responsible - You need to be able to take charge if there's an emergency, and should not be impaired.

After your fire

Extinguish – Close the lid and vents and leave the fire to burn out. When cool, carefully place ashes and embers into a metal container and saturate with water. Extinguished coals and ashes should be placed a safe distance from all structures and combustible materials.

Store - Allow the BBQ or grill to cool completely, if you store it inside.

Dial 111 immediately in an emergency. Anything that could cause loss of life, serious injury or loss of property is a fire emergency.

Related content

Learn more about how to stay safe on the Fire and Emergency New Zealand website.

- [Fire Types](#)
- [Urban home fire safety checklist](#)
- [Rural home fire safety checklist](#)