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Press Release

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USE OF BARBECUES (OPEN FLAME COOKING DEVICES) ON BALCONIES/DECKS OF APARTMENTS, CONDOS AND TOWNHOUSES

The new California Fire Code, adopted January 1, 2008 contains restrictions pertaining to the use of open-flame cooking devices (barbecues) on balconies/decks of apartment buildings, condominiums, and townhomes (Reference 2007 CFC, Sections 308.3.1 and 308.3.1.1). The Code applies to all multi-family dwellings, but the issue and subsequent requirements and limitations do not apply to single and two family dwellings (Exceptions listed under Sections 308.3.1 and 308.3.1.1).

The following are key points and how the code provisions are intended to be enforced within the boundaries of the Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District:

- The Code restricts the use of barbecues including charcoal, wood burning, or LP-gas cooking devices on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.
- In this application, the determination of combustible construction is wood siding or use of other wood products on exterior walls, ceilings, and/or decks of balconies.
- For first floor units with wood siding or use of other wood products on exterior walls, ceilings, and/or decks of balconies/patios, or areas of wood fencing must be separated by 10 feet from barbecue devices.
- Exception: The above noted restrictions do not apply to single family or duplex structures or when multi-family structures and balconies or patios are protected by fire sprinklers, or are constructed of non-combustible material and 10 feet away from any combustible materials, or when LP-gas cooking devices limit the size fuel container to 1 pound LP-gas capacity (size of a typical camping LP-cylinder).

Homeowner Associations and apartment building managers may have regulations that are more restrictive than the California Fire Code.

In a related item, we are starting to see an increase in the requests for the use of recreational fire pits. There are two different types of pits. An unimproved pit dug in the ground and/or surrounded by rock and the manufactured types. Both types of fire pits require a permit from the Fire District and necessitate an inspection. The approval for such burning shall only be issued to

the owner of the property where the fire pit exists. Clearances around the pit shall be 10 feet in all directions. These permits have some restrictions associated with them and can be suspended at any time. The Fire District requires ¼ inch steel ember screening for all fire pits. A permit can be obtained at the Main Street Fire Department Station.