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## Spring Forward to Backyard Safety

Getting outdoor areas ready for spring and summer season entertaining is a top priority for many homeowners. According to a recent survey conducted on behalf of the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), two-thirds of homeowners report spending more time in their outdoor living spaces than in years past, and more than half are looking for new ways to extend the outdoor living season.

Before bringing out portable appliances and firing up the propane grill, PERC offers the following tips for a safe and enjoyable backyard living:

- Keep burnable materials like dry grass, wood, or debris at least 10 feet away from propane tanks and cylinders. Never burn wood, coal, or anything other than propane in a propane fire pit.
- Don't store tanks or cylinders inside buildings, including garages or sheds.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for the appliance you're using, including where to put the unit, how to connect it to a cylinder, and how to use, clean, and store it. Fire pits and heaters need varying amounts of clearance, depending on the model. In general, allow at least three feet of clearance on all sides.
- Have your fire pit inspected by a professional every year.
- Before lighting your propane grill for the first time in the spring, check the cooking grid and warming rack to be sure both are in their proper place. Clean the grid, the interior of the grill, and the burner (according to the manufacturer's instructions) with a wire brush or scraper to remove any built-up food. And remember — always keep the top open when lighting the grill until you are sure it is lit.
- If the igniter fails to light the grill after two or three tries, turn off the gas and replace the igniter according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- When it's time to refill or replace a propane cylinder, stow it upright in your vehicle in a well-ventilated area, not the trunk. Return home directly after refilling.
- Replace any tank that has holes, dents, rusted weak spots, cracks, or other damage, or is past its expiration date.