
Condo Smarts

Headline: Barbeque Risks

Topic: Balconies and Decks; Barbeques

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Dear Tony: Our neighbour recently had a fire in their barbeque. The damage to our two townhouses was siding, decks and extensive smoke damage as everyone had their windows open. Our home insurance is covering the damage to our personal property and interior of the strata lot, but the neighbour does not have home owner insurance. The strata corporation's insurance provider has sent an adjuster and the amount of exterior damage to the siding and decks is above the deductible so the claim is proceeding, but there is no indication they will have the repairs within their unit completed. As the affected neighbour, how can I force their repairs? Otherwise, the odour of smoke damage will never go away. Could a strata corporation prohibit barbeques even though this is an outdoor back deck?

Myrna F.

Dear Myrna: Strata corporations may adopt bylaws and rules that regulate the use and enjoyment of common property and common assets. Even if a balcony or deck is part of a strata lot, a bylaw may still be applied that restricts, limits, or prohibits the activities in those areas, including prohibiting barbeques or outdoor cooking.

Exterior areas such as decks, balconies and patios do not have fire suppression, and the radiant heat from a barbeque that either catches fire or is left on may result in a dramatic spontaneous combustion of adjacent areas. Even highrise concrete buildings experience BBQ fires with dramatic consequences when windows and balcony glazing are damaged and can easily exceed \$25,000 – 50,000 in cost.

When a homeowner in a strata causes a loss as a result of their activities, everyone pays the price; however, those home owners are still subject to civil suits and claims for damages, losses, and personal expenses. An activity such as barbecuing resulting in a fire, exposes

the owners of the strata lot to a number of potential claims, including property damages and injuries. Every strata lot owner is advised to maintain their own home owner insurance policy to ensure their strata lot, personal property and general liability is covered.

While we all love a good barbeque, cooking outdoors in multi family settings creates safety, health, and property risks for everyone. Most strata lots in BC, especially apartment and midrise buildings do not have air conditioning. When we experience a heat wave, there is an expectation we can safely open our doors and windows for fresh air. Unfortunately, this coincides with barbeque season, and smoke damage will occur in exposed homes, posing a significant health risk for persons with respiratory/health issues often compounding their isolation and discomfort. Many strata corporations have prohibited outdoor cooking to ensure no one is affected by odours, smoke and risk of fire. If there is a sufficient location within the strata corporation, a communal BBQ away from buildings is another option.