

CAPITAL INSURANCE AGENCY OF WISCONSIN

Tips to Keep Your Football Tailgate Safe

Whether you're in love with the game or the food, football season has officially arrived. That means the fun of tailgating season has also begun. It takes a lot of effort to host a successful tailgate, but it's important to keep yourself, your cars, and your guests safe. Here's what you need to know and do before the big tailgate...we mean game.

1. **Make a Plan**

First things first: start with a plan. Will snacks suffice, or does live grilling sound more appealing? Better yet, how about both? When you decide on the menu, make sure it's stored properly (meaning the temperature and proximity to other foods--we'll get into that below). Depending on where you live and how far into the season you are, you could come across some different weather conditions (sun and heat, rain, or even cold and snow). It's important to dress the part and pack items to keep you at a comfortable temperature during the tailgate and big game.

2. **Food Prep and Storage**

Whether you plan to grill or have pre-made food, it's important to make sure the food stays at a safe temperature for eating. If you have food that you're planning to grill, common foods such as burgers or hotdogs need to be at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit. Prepared foods like subs or deli trays should be kept in a separate cooler. On a cold or comfortable day, food can be left out for roughly two hours before it should be consumed or tossed. On a hot day (over 90 degrees Fahrenheit), limit that time to one hour.

3. **Safety and Sanitation**

If you're planning to grill, it's a good idea to come prepared with the essentials (yes, including the prized "Grill Master" apron). It's also a good idea to have a fire extinguisher handy in case something goes wrong. Bring a plastic container to store dirty cooking utensils after you're done cooking and serving guests.

To keep your food station clean, we recommend having plenty of paper towels, hand sanitizer, and garbage bags on hand. Paper towels carry fewer germs than cloth towels, especially after handling raw and undercooked food. Hand sanitizer should be available before cooking or making your way through the food line. And finally, garbage bags keep the tailgate clean and your neighbors happy.

4. **Don't Forget the D.D.**

We know there's an elephant in the room... what about adult beverages? Pre-game rituals often include drinks. Before participating, it's important to identify a designated driver. In doing so, you eliminate the possibility of an impaired driver getting behind the wheel. In some instances, tailgating can turn into an all-day or evening event; encourage tailgate party goers to have food in between drinks and plenty of water to stay hydrated. Again, it's necessary to make transportation arrangements *before* you arrive.

5. **Heading Home**

After the fun and festivities, make sure your tailgate area is clean and garbage is disposed of in the designated area. Take a survey around your car. Make sure there aren't any cans, bottles, or other items you could run over that may cause damage to your vehicle. Also, there's likely to be traffic when you're heading out of the tailgate, so it's important to drive with caution when you're exiting the parking lot.