

S A F E T Y N O T E S

June 2014

Prepare for Independence Day



For the past 21 years, the cities of Spokane, Spokane Valley, and Cheney as well as all of the unincorporated areas of Spokane County have observed a complete ban on the individual use of fireworks. The rationale for continuing such a ban on “bombs bursting in air” includes impressive statistics comparing the damage done to people and property before and after the 1993 ordinance.

In the ten years before the total ban, Spokane Fire Department responded to a yearly average of 104 fireworks-caused fires just between the nine day period of June 28 and July 6. Since the ban, that average has dropped to five. In that same pre-ban

period, Spokane-area hospitals and emergency centers treated an average of 29 injured persons. Over the past 21 years that average has also dropped to five.

What many people don't realize about the community's call for a ban on individual fireworks is the fact that fireworks-caused incidents so overwhelmed the fire and medical response system in Spokane that 9-1-1 calls had to be stacked. In other words, once our first responders were all in the field putting out garage, house, field, and commercial building fires ignited by a variety of “safe-and-sane” fireworks, additional calls to 9-1-1 were met with “Can you please hold the line?” while operators scrambled to find appropriate help. Over twenty years ago the leaders of our community and most citizens recognized the folly of trading preventable fireworks fires for immediate responses to heart attacks, strokes, seizures, and car crashes.

Despite the numbers that document a dramatic decrease in fireworks-caused fires and injuries, there are still individuals who drive outside the city limits to buy fireworks they intend to light in Spokane. Even one lit sparkler can earn a resident a \$513 fine. At first sight, that may appear to be an excessive response. On the other hand, sparklers account for about one-third of the estimated 8,000 serious burns treated in emergency rooms across the U.S. each year. Sparklers will burn at 1200 to 1500 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, some people have taken up the hobby of creating sparkler bombs, explosive devices that now take a predictable toll in lost limbs each year across America.

Besides the concerns with fire and injury, there is considerable collateral damage associated with common fireworks: most dogs and cats are terrorized by the

A Public Safety Message from your Spokane Area Fire Dept.s

WARNING: All Fireworks Are Illegal In Spokane

*all unincorporated areas of Spokane County, Spokane Valley, Liberty Lake, Millwood & Cheney



**CELEBRATE 4TH OF JULY
with PROFESSIONAL DISPLAYS**

sounds; veterans with PTSD are uncomfortably reminded of their battlefield experience with the unexpected explosions in their own neighborhood; and workers are kept awake throughout the night by inconsiderate neighbors.

Spokane Fire Department is planning for another relatively quiet Independence Day where most residents genuinely celebrate their opportunities to contribute to the common good of the community. Property managers can post the attached reminders so that tenants new to the Spokane community become aware of our fireworks ordinance. Long-time residents should already know that “if it’s lit, they are liable” and the fine is \$513.

Everyone is invited to enjoy the annual community fireworks display conducted by licensed pyrotechnicians and monitored by Spokane Fire Department

A Different Kind of Daisy

Lacking sufficient electrical outlets, some creative tenants and maintenance personnel may link multiple power strips to the same outlet or link power strips with extension cords. However these “daisy chains” violate the National Electrical Code as well as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

The problem with daisy chains is they eventually cause fires. Since power strips are typically tested for providing power to a maximum of four to six items, interconnected strips or strips plugged into the same circuit create a power overload.

Too many people think of extension cords as permanent fixtures. In fact, OSHA regulations only allow extension cords as **temporary** wiring for up to 90 days! Extension cords used to energize power strips create an additional fire hazard because electrical resistance increases with increased power cord length. The increased resistance also increases heat generation with the accompanying risk of equipment failure and fire.

Eliminate the daisy chains by purchasing power strips with longer cords, moving the furniture, or upgrading the electrical service and number of outlets. Recognize that power strips must be installed on a flat surface: those suspended in the air put additional stress on electrical connections. Also be aware of multiple recalls by the Consumer Product Safety Commission of power strips and extensions cords. Check www.cpsc.gov for details by product type or brand name, including last year’s recall of 15 million APC surge protectors.



Sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at 509.625.7058 or jdoherty@spokanefire.org



Be Sure to visit our website at
spokanefire.org

There you will find links to our blog, Facebook,
Twitter and YouTube pages!



**WARNING: ALL FIREWORKS ARE
ILLEGAL IN SPOKANE**



\$513 Fine

+ Possible Cost of Fire Department Response & Damages

FIRECRACKERS, BOTTLE ROCKETS and MISSILES are NOT ALLOWED IN ANY PART OF WASHINGTON STATE (with the exception of some Indian Reservations in areas designated by the Tribal Council).

- ✓ Possession of firecrackers, bottle rockets and missiles is illegal throughout Washington State. They can be confiscated at any time.
- ✓ In addition to the fines and court costs, persons who start fires with fireworks are liable for restitution of damaged property and for recovery of Fire Department response costs.
- ✓ If it has to be lit, it is an illegal firework in Spokane. SPARKLERS are illegal: they burn at 1200° and cause serious injuries.
- ✓ PARENTS are responsible for damages associated with their children using fireworks.
- ✓ For violations of the ban, call CRIME CHECK at 456-2233.