

## SAFETY NOTES

JUNE, 2015

### FIREWORKS: An Ordinance That Works



No one should have heard the pop of a consumer firework in any Spokane neighborhood since the summer of 1993! That was the year the City of Spokane, Spokane Valley, Millwood, Cheney, Liberty Lake and all of the unincorporated areas of Spokane County observed the first full ban of consumer fireworks

Commercial fireworks are set off each year by licensed pyrotechnicians at Riverfront and Liberty Lake for the community celebration of Independence Day. But for the average citizen, the lighting of any type of firework can result in at least a \$513 fine.

During the ten years prior to our complete fireworks ban, an average of 104 fireworks-caused fires occurred just in the city limits of Spokane during the 9-day period between June 28 and July 6. Firefighters were so busy running from one fire to the next that there were times when 9-1-1 calls had to be “stacked” because

there were no available first responders. Since approximately 80% of Fire Department runs are for medical emergencies, it is easy to see the increased community risk. 9-1-1 callers seeking immediate help for persons either suffering a heart attack or stroke or calling for passengers injured in a motor vehicle collision would be stunned to hear the operator say “Can you hold the line a moment?” Dispatch operators struggled to find an available fire unit to respond to the emergency call.

Not everyone complies with the fireworks ordinance. But most of the community made enough changes that the pre-ban 104 yearly average of fireworks-caused fires plummeted to a 20 year post-ban average of 5. Looking at the ten year trend prior to the ban, we have calculated the number of fireworks-caused fires potentially prevented in the subsequent twenty years.

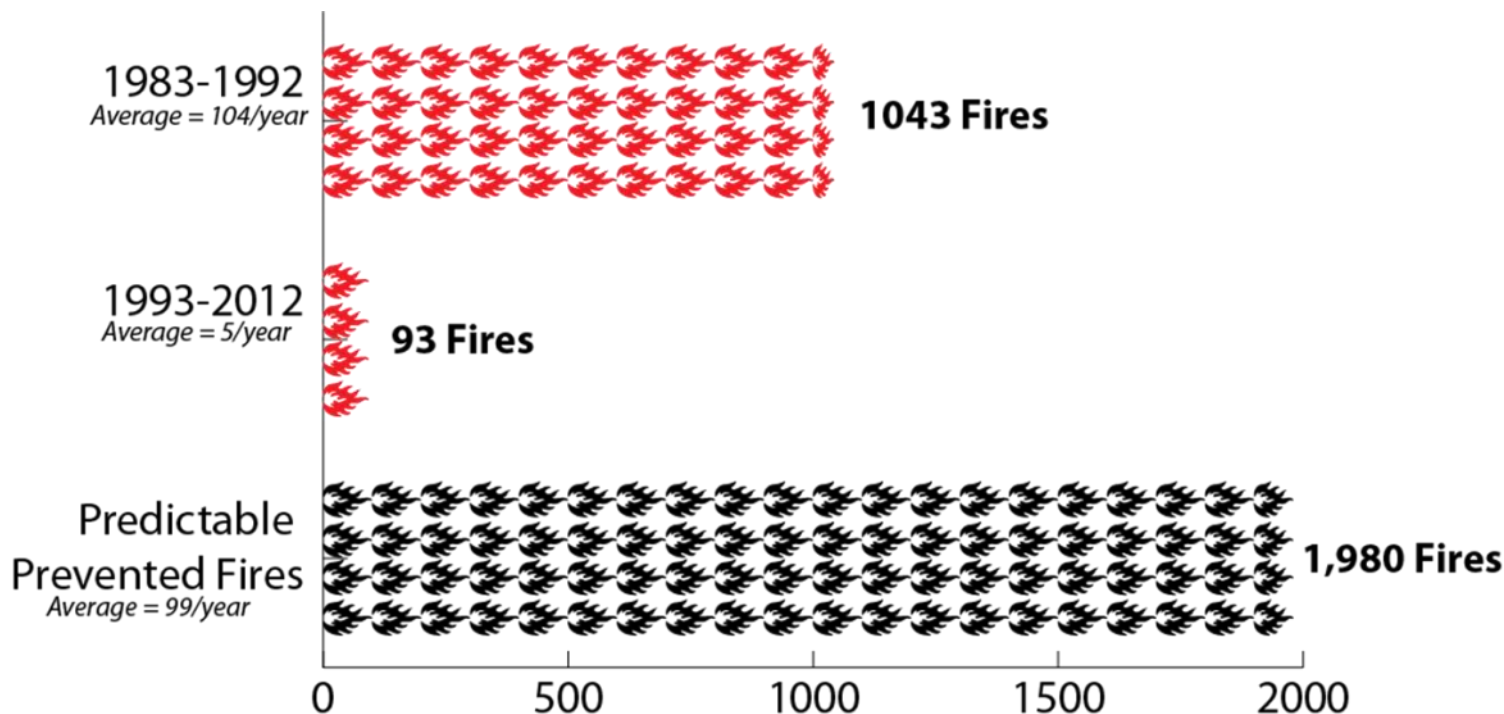
There have been similar reductions in the number of fireworks-caused injuries treated in local hospitals. In the ten years prior to the ban, area hospitals treated an average of



Please leave the fireworks to the professionals and have a safe and happy Fourth of July!

29 persons injured by fireworks. In the twenty years since the ban, the average number of injuries treated was reduced to five. Only 13% of those injuries treated in Spokane-area hospitals actually occurred in Spokane County. In other words, the majority of fireworks patients were persons who used fireworks outside of the ban area and were then transported to Spokane for care.

## Trend Analysis Shows Fireworks Fires PREVENTED: 1993-2012



Please remind your residents that the individual use of fireworks is illegal in Spokane. Anticipated hot and dry weather further increases the chances for fires in the urban-wildland interface. Spokane Fire Department's public notice is attached. For violations of the fireworks ban, call CRIME CHECK at 456-2233.

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at [jdoherty@spokanefire.org](mailto:jdoherty@spokanefire.org) or by calling 509.625.7058.



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# PUBLIC NOTICE AND WARNING

**ALL common fireworks are ILLEGAL in Spokane County and the Cities of Spokane, Spokane Valley, Millwood, Cheney and Liberty Lake.**

**Since 1993, NO person can BUY, SELL or USE any type of common fireworks in these areas of Spokane.**

**Fines range from \$513 to \$1,000 for each violation.**



**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 ° F 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.**