

S A F E T Y N O T E S

JUNE, 2016



Now is the time that newcomers to Spokane may be asking how to find a supply of consumer fireworks to help celebrate July 4th with their families and friends. They may not be aware of the fireworks ordinance that has been in full effect for more than 20 years in this community. The annual data from 9-1-1 and fireworks enforcement personnel attest to the fact there are also local scofflaws who are planning June trips outside Spokane city and county jurisdictions to secure personal fireworks that are illegal to have or to use here. June is the time when fire jurisdictions throughout Washington focus on the possibility of extensive fire loss related to fireworks.

Spokane Fire Department appreciates the Spokane Public Schools and other partners throughout the community who use their reader boards, newsletters or bulletin boards to remind Spokane of our fireworks ordinance. No consumer fireworks have been allowed to be sold, purchased or used in the Cities of Spokane, Spokane Valley, Cheney, Millwood or the unincorporated areas of Spokane County since June 1993.

As a result, the City of Spokane has enjoyed a huge drop in the number of fireworks incidents from a 10-year pre-ban average of 104 fireworks-caused fires to a 23-year post-ban average of 5 fireworks-caused fires between June 28 and July 6 each year. Throughout Spokane County, the pre-ban average of 29 fireworks-caused injuries treated in local emergency rooms also dropped to a post-ban average of 5. Last year, there were five fireworks fires in the City of Spokane and five injuries treated at area hospitals. The vast majority of fireworks injuries treated in Spokane hospitals in the past decade were incidents that actually happened outside of Spokane County but required patient transport to Spokane medical care facilities.

In short, our fireworks ban is a documented success in terms of reduced fires and injuries. Unfortunately, there are still individuals who bring fireworks into Spokane and feel entitled to set them off to celebrate Independence Day. They may not be aware of the negative effects of those fireworks, beyond the usual measure of unintended fire and injury. Two large groups who are negatively impacted are military veterans

and pets. For veterans who suffer from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), the intermittent firework explosions throughout their neighborhood during the July 4th holiday causes increased stress and distress. Some seek relief by traveling to Canada for the holiday while others spend hours in movie theaters trying to escape the sound of illegal fireworks exploding near their home. Households with cats and dogs witness the anxiety pets experience from the snap and bang of typical consumer fireworks. In fact, July 5th is the busiest day of the year for SCRAPS and Spokanimal as employees and volunteers try to reunite terrified runaway dogs with their owners. No domestic pet in Spokane should have been subjected to the sound of personal fireworks in the past two decades. No person under the age of 23 should have ever heard the sound of individual consumer fireworks in their neighborhood in Spokane.

Unfortunately, classroom surveys of fifth and sixth graders in local schools indicate that many children hear or use consumer fireworks in their neighborhood despite the ban and the potential \$513 fine. Each year, between the example of some adults and the influence of the internet, more Spokane children in that age group indicate they are familiar with “sparkler bombs”. However, they are also surprised to learn that sparkler bombs are considered IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and they see photos of peers who sustained such life-changing injuries as amputated limbs resulting from a homemade sparkler bomb.

The simple sparkler accounted for 41% of the 11,400 people treated in U.S. emergency rooms in 2013. This number does not include injuries from sparkler bombs, the devices that kids and adults build with simple “safe-and-sane” sparklers. Sparklers will burn at over 1200 degrees F. The 2013 Fireworks Annual Report from the Consumer Product Safety Commission indicated that, nationwide, children in the two age categories of 0 to 4 and 10 to 14 suffered the highest number of fireworks injuries. In Washington State the 2015 fireworks injury report indicated adult men in the two age categories of 21 to 28 and 36 or older were most frequently injured. In short, “fireworks safety tips” cannot guarantee freedom from injury or fire loss to either children or adults.

As managers, please alert your tenants to our local law regarding the individual use of fireworks. Encourage instead their participation in public displays by licensed pyrotechnicians such as the Riverfront Park fireworks show on the night of July 4. Remind individuals of the \$513 fine as well as additional restitution should individual consumer fireworks cause damage. Ask everyone to be mindful of the rights of others to not be subjected to unexpected explosions in their neighborhood! Please call Crime Check at 456-2233 to report fireworks infractions.



The attached informational sheet may be of help to you in advising your residents of fireworks expectations in Spokane. Thank you for your assistance in helping everyone in the Spokane community, including firefighters and emergency room personnel, enjoy a safer celebration of the birth of our nation.

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting [Mike Miller at mmiller@spokanefire.org](mailto:mmiller@spokanefire.org) or by calling 509.625.7000



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spokanefire.org

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Twitter and YouTube pages!





Spokane
FIRE DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC SAFETY NOTICE

WARNING:

ALL FIREWORKS ARE ILLEGAL IN SPOKANE



UP TO \$1000 FINE FOR EACH VIOLATION

+ 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.