

THE COST OF CARELESSNESS

Every Independence Day as we celebrate the birth of America, many first responders across the US are on high alert, responding to the careless use of fireworks. We may think of these situations as minor, but even in Nebraska there are more than 100 reported injuries because of fireworks-related accidents each year.

The reality is that fireworks can cause substantial damage. It's estimated that more than 18,500 fires damage or destroy 1,300 structures and 300 vehicles across the country each year. In 2013, these fires resulted in \$21 million in direct property damage.

The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public display conducted by trained professionals. But if you plan on hosting your own celebration, the Nebraska Forest Service would like to remind you of a few safety tips that can help prevent your holiday from becoming a big dud.



FIREWORKS FACTS

- Over 60,000 tons of fireworks are used each year
- There are more fires reported on the Fourth of July than any other time, 40% of these fires are related to fireworks
- Mishandling displays is the most common cause of fireworks injuries
- Fireworks and alcohol should not be mixed
- Children between the ages of 5 and 9 have a higher percentage of injury over any other age group
- Males are injured by fireworks more often than females by nearly 3:1

Sources: Consumer Products Safety Commission, 2015. Nebraska Safety Council, 2017. Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Office, 2017.

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NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE

CELEBRATING SAFELY: FIREWORKS 101

NEBRASKA STATE LAW

State law only allows for fireworks to be sold between June 24 and July 5 or between December 28 and January 1. Local jurisdictions have the authority to be more restrictive. Always check with your local volunteer fire department to find out what restrictions, if any, they may have on the dates fireworks may be sold.

A variety of fireworks may be sold across Nebraska; however, there are some restrictions. Fireworks sold at Nebraska stands must be legal in Nebraska. It is against the law to transport illegal fireworks into the state. For a full list of illegal fireworks, do a web search for: "Nebraska State Fire Marshal, fireworks".

SAFETY TIPS

The fact remains that most wildland fires associated with fireworks start when nearby grass and brush ignite. Suddenly, winds pick up and feed off the dry July conditions. At this point, there is a real possibility of creating a dangerous, life threatening situation. Below are numerous tips to keep you and yours safe during your annual festivities.

- Only buy your fireworks from approved, licensed vendors
- Never experiment or modify any of your existing fireworks
- Never attempt to create your own fireworks or aerial displays
- Always read and follow all label warnings



- Never give fireworks to small children
- Only allow children to use fireworks when supervised by a responsible adult
- Keep children a safe distance apart when playing with small displays such as sparklers
- Always dispose of hot sparkler wires in a metal bucket
- Always use fireworks in a large, open area cleared of all flammable vegetation
- Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from houses, buildings, vegetation and other flammable materials

MORE SAFETY TIPS

- Obey local laws related to fireworks
- Light fireworks one at a time
- Never re-light a "dud" firework. Do not touch the display for 15-20 minutes, then soak it in

a bucket of water and throw away in a metal trash container

- Always shoot fireworks away from buildings and people
- Keep unused fireworks a safe distance away from the area where they are being lit
- Always have a garden hose and/or several buckets of water available when using fireworks
- Dispose of spent fireworks properly by soaking in water and placing them in a metal trash container
- Loose clothing can catch fire and should not be worn while handling fireworks
- Never carry fireworks in your pockets
- Do not light fireworks in windy conditions

EVEN MORE SAFETY TIPS

- Pay attention to advisories from your local fire officials. What are they recommending about the use of fireworks compared to weather forecast?
- When not in use, store fireworks in a closed box away from sources of accidental ignition
- Always comply with all state and local regulations governing the use of fireworks
- In case of fire, call the fire department immediately and evacuate the area
- Wear eye protection when lighting fireworks
- Never throw or toss fireworks toward people