

LEGAL OR NOT FIREWORKS ARE TOO RISKY FOR AMATEURS

Albeit fireworks may be legal in our neighboring jurisdictions, the City of Alexandria has a more dense population with multi-family dwellings, historic structures, and an increased potential for an unexpected event due to the various types of construction.

Permanent scarring, loss of vision, dismemberment – these are too often the harsh realities of amateur fireworks use. To keep the public safe from fireworks-related injuries and deaths, the Alexandria Fire Department's Fire Prevention and Life Safety Section urges everyone to treat fireworks, whether legal or illegal for consumers, as suitable only for use by trained professionals. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), amateur fireworks use endangers not only the users, but also bystanders and surrounding property and structures. Pyrotechnic devices ranging from sparklers to aerial rockets cause thousands of fires and serious injuries each year.

In recent years, fireworks have been one of the leading causes of injuries serious enough to require hospital emergency room treatment. Fireworks can result in severe burns, fractures, or scars or even death or disfigurement that can last a lifetime. The thousands of serious injuries each year typically harm the eyes, head, or hands, and are mostly reported in states where fireworks are legal. Even sparklers, which are considered by many to be harmless, reach temperatures of more than 1,000° F.

Fireworks are dangerous and unpredictable, especially in the hands of amateurs. When things go wrong with fireworks, they go very wrong, very fast, far faster than any fire protection provisions can reliably respond.

Wooded areas, homes, and even automobiles have become engulfed in flames because of fireworks. Fireworks-related fires have typically caused at least \$20 million in property loss (not adjusted for inflation) each year in recent years. A substantial portion of the structure fire property loss due to fireworks typically involves bottle rockets or other fireworks rockets. These rockets can land on rooftops or wedge within certain structures and still retain enough heat to cause a fire.

There are safer alternatives to using fireworks on the Fourth of July. Public fireworks displays are one of those alternatives. Conducted by trained professionals, these displays are the smartest and safest fireworks alternative for anyone because they are established under controlled settings and regulations.

May you have a ***Happy*** and ***Safe*** 4th of July this year and for the many years to come!