

After the "Rockets' Red Glare" Comes the Cleanup

Local News

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LONG BEACH, Wash. - After the colorful Fourth of July fireworks have faded from the night sky, they're not really gone - not if you count the leftover plastic that litters beaches, lawns and fields across the state. A Washington group urges people to think about that as they select their fireworks.

Ellen Anderson with Environmentally Friendly Fireworks says her volunteer cleanup crew at Long Beach picks up pounds of plastic for months after the July Fourth holiday.

We get however many we can grab on the morning after, but the tide takes out a lot of these plastics because they've been shot through the air, from the beach out over the water. So, every month, tides bring in more of these silly little pieces of plastic, because they float on the water. - Ellen Anderson Anderson, who also works at a bird sanctuary, says they're treating more seabirds with problems from eating the plastic. A World News video showing damage to the environment and wildlife from plastic in fireworks is online at wn.com.

When you buy fireworks, Anderson suggests avoiding the aerial or missile styles and novelty products made to look like tanks, planes and boats, because those tend to contain the most plastic parts. Aerial fireworks are allowed in Washington, although in some states they are illegal for home use.

To minimize the environmental impact of fireworks, Anderson says you have to be a smart shopper: Look closely at what's inside the cellophane wrapping and read the label.

"If it says 'battery' on the labeling, you are pretty much guaranteed that, for however many shots there are in that battery - if it's 25 or 100 - you're going to have that many pieces of plastic."

She also suggests that people mention to fireworks vendors that they'd like to see products made without plastic. She says one major manufacturer has told her it is developing some, although it may be several years before they are on the market.

The group's website is www.plasticsinfireworks.org.