

Washington Fire Marshall Asks: Are Your Fireworks Legal?

Local News

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Posted on : June 29, 2009 at 5:30 am

In 2008 there were 785 fireworks-related incidents in Washington resulting in more than \$200,000 in property loss. Fire service officials urge residents to work together to reduce this loss by knowing the legal consequences and taking responsibility. Fireworks sold on tribal lands are not subject to local and state laws and may not be legal in your community. Examples of fireworks legal to purchase and use on tribal lands, but not legal in Washington State, are bottle rockets, firecrackers and missiles. Remember-it's your responsibility to know the laws in your community.

Legal Consequences: There may be legal consequences for any injuries or damages caused by the irresponsible use of fireworks. These consequences range from being charged with malicious mischief, assault or a gross misdemeanor. Examples include possession of illegal explosive devices, such as fireworks that have been altered. Making an improvised explosive device is a gross misdemeanor. A gross misdemeanor can bring a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or one year in prison. If property was damaged, it could be considered a property crime which is malicious mischief. If used to blow up something, it could be considered a destructive device which is a felony. If someone was hurt by the device, a person could be charged with bodily harm and assault, depending on intent.

Take Responsibility: Personal fireworks require personal responsibility. Be sure the fireworks you purchase are legal to possess and discharge. Know the dates and times fireworks are allowed in your community. Set family boundaries. Talk with family members and guests about the fireworks laws for your area. Laws restricting or banning the use of fireworks in cities and counties are listed on the fireworks website at <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fireworks>. Stay away from illegal explosive devices such as M80's and M100's. These items are not fireworks, they are **illegal explosive devices**. The damage they cause can be devastating and life altering.

Remember the three B's of fireworks safety: Be Prepared-Have water nearby and put pets indoors, Be Safe-Only adults should light fireworks, and Be Responsible-clean up fireworks debris. For more information about fireworks safety, public fireworks displays and the fireworks laws for your area, check the Celebrate Safely website at <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/fireworks.htm>. *The Office of the State Fire Marshal is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State including inspections of state licensed facilities, plan review of school construction projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington State's firefighters, and collecting emergency response data.*