



Bexar County Fire Marshal

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 24, 2015

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Fourth of July fireworks sales period begins without restrictions

The fireworks sales period for the Fourth of July officially begins today and will run through the holiday without restrictions on the sale or use in unincorporated Bexar County. The Keetch-Byram Drought Index of 28 is far too low for Commissioners Court to take any action, Fire Marshal Chris Lopez said.

“We’ve been really fortunate to have as much rain as we’ve had this year, which has pulled us out of the drought,” Lopez said. “However, that also means there is abundant vegetation on the ground, which provides fuel for fires to spread if it starts to dry out. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to watch a public display put on by professionals.”

Even in the best weather conditions there are still dangers associated with the personal use of fireworks. According to the National Fire Protection Association, approximately 17,800 fires were started by fireworks in 2011 resulting in an estimated \$32 million in property damage. On average, 240 people go to the emergency room every day with fireworks-related injuries in the month around the July 4th holiday, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The CPSC recorded eight fireworks-related deaths and an estimated 11,400 injuries treated in U.S. emergency rooms during calendar year 2013. Sixty-five percent of those injuries occurred from June 21 through July 21, 2013.

Residents who use consumer fireworks should follow these tips to avoid causing injuries and damage to property:

- Select an area free of dry grasses and other dead vegetation.
- Keep a bucket of water or a water hose nearby.
- Do not use fireworks when the weather forecast calls for winds above 10 mph.
- Always read and follow manufacturer’s recommendations and instructions.
- Have an adult present and never give fireworks to children.
- Only use fireworks outdoors. It is against state law to shoot fireworks from a motor vehicle.
- Always have plenty of water available to extinguish a fire should one start.
- Never experiment or make your own fireworks. Make sure you only use fireworks purchased from a reliable licensed seller.

- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never re-light a “dud” firework. If a firework does not work properly, wait 15 to 20 minutes and then soak it in a bucket of water and dispose of it properly.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place.
- Never throw or point fireworks at other people.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Do not shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- Wear eye protection and never have any part of the body over the firework.

It is illegal to discharge fireworks within 600 feet of a hospital, sanitarium, veterinary hospital, school or church; and within 100 feet of a fuel dispensing station for flammable or combustible liquids; and to discharge fireworks at or from a motor vehicle.

Lopez also wants to remind residents that arson charges can be brought against a person who recklessly causes a fire, regardless of the person’s intent. Residents of San Antonio should be reminded that it is against the law to possess, use or transport fireworks in the City of San Antonio without a permit. Violations are Class C misdemeanors, punishable by fines from \$100 to \$2,000.

The Bexar County Public Safety Communications Center will operate a fireworks hotline from July 2 through July 6. Residents who see unsafe or illegal uses of fireworks should call (210) 335-FIRE. Medical emergencies or fires caused by fireworks should be reported by calling 911.

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