

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Leave Fireworks to the Experts By Daniel Pease, City of Beloit Fire Chief

Summer and Independence Day usually includes barbecues, sparklers and fireworks. Beloit Fire Department wants everyone to enjoy the 4th of July while remaining safe. In terms of fireworks, the Beloit Fire Department recommends not to use any fireworks at all. Consider safer alternatives to celebrate. Class III fireworks may be legal; however no firework is really safe.

A new report by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) found a 50 percent increase in deaths and injuries from fireworks-related incidents in 2020, compared to 2019. In 2020, an estimated 15,600 people were hospitalized with injuries related to fireworks - the highest number in the last 15 years, the Consumer Product Safety Commission reported. Sixty-six percent of the injuries happened between June 21, 2020 and July 21, 2020.

Additionally, fireworks start an average of 18,500 fires each year, including 1,300 structure fires, 300 vehicle fires and nearly 17,000 other fires.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice outlines what fireworks can be possessed and used in Wisconsin without a permit:

State law allows the sale, possession and use, without a permit, of sparklers not exceeding 36 inches in length, stationary cones and fountains, toy snakes, smoke bombs, caps, noisemakers, confetti poppers with less than ¼ grain of explosive mixture, and novelty devices that spin or move on the ground. Wis. Stat. § 167.10(1). There is no age restriction on sale, possession or use of these devices and the statute does not classify them as fireworks. Local ordinances may be more restrictive than state statutes and may prohibit any of these items or limit their sale or use. These are the only kinds of “fireworks,” as that word is commonly used, that a person may use or possess without a permit or that may be sold to a person who does not have a permit.

Possessing or using any other fireworks, including, for example, firecrackers, roman candles, bottle rockets and mortars, in Wisconsin without a valid permit is illegal.

The City of Beloit's fireworks ordinance can be viewed online here:

https://library.municode.com/wi/beloit/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH14LIPE_14.03FIPERERE2949

If you choose to use legal fireworks be sure to follow the following safety tips:

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks - Including sparklers
- Never use fireworks while impaired by drugs or alcohol
- Anyone using fireworks or standing nearby should wear protective eyewear
- Never light fireworks indoors
- Only use them away from people, houses and flammable material
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person
- Never ignite devices in a container
- Do not try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks
- Soak both spent and unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding
- Never use illegal fireworks
- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire
- Obey all local laws- In Beloit only class III fireworks are allowed.
- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands. Place fireworks on the ground before lighting to avoid accidental hand burns or dropping the firework
- Only light one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after lighting. Do not light fireworks in windy conditions that can affect how the sparks fly.

Sparklers are Dangerous

Every year, young children can be found with sparklers in hand, but sparklers are a lot more dangerous than most people think.

Sparklers burn at about 2,000 degrees - hot enough to melt some metals. Sparklers can quickly ignite clothing, and children have received severe burns from dropping sparklers on their feet. According to the National Fire Protection Association, sparklers alone account for more than 25% of emergency room visits for fireworks injuries. For children under 5 years of age, sparklers accounted for nearly half of the total estimated injuries.

Again, consider using safer alternatives to celebrate!