Fireworks laws and safety guidelines: What you need to know ahead of July 4th holiday



Even with an array of professionally produced fireworks extravaganzas on the calendar to celebrate the upcoming July 4th holiday, it's a sure bet that there will be hundreds of additional pyrotechnic shows unfolding in neighborhood streets and yards throughout Volusia and Flagler counties.

In anticipation of those amateur displays, law enforcement and fire officials are urging residents to be extremely careful handling fireworks, recommending that the best thing to do is leave it to the pros.

"The safest way to enjoy fireworks is by watching public displays," said Fire Chief Joe King of Volusia County Fire Rescue. "We caution residents against using fireworks because they can cause fires and injuries when used improperly."

There are twice as many fires reported on Independence Day than on any other day annually, according to Volusia County Fire Rescue, with half of those related to fireworks.

If you're considering doing your own show anyway, as many folks obviously will be doing, here's what you need to know about fireworks laws and safety guidelines:

State law allows fireworks, but they are banned on Volusia beaches

In Florida, the added interest in home fireworks has been kindled by a state law passed three years ago that makes it legal for the public to use fireworks on the July 4th holiday, one of three occasions permitted annually that also include New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Despite the state law, use and possession of fireworks remains prohibited on Volusia County beaches according to county ordinance. Also, the state law is superseded by local or county ordinances that ban personal fireworks.

In Volusia County, several cities including Daytona Beach, DeLand, Deltona, Edgewater, New Smyrna Beach and Ponce Inlet have ordinances prohibiting fireworks, according to the Volusia County Sheriff's Office. To report a fireworks complaint in Volusia County, you can call 386-248-1777 and press option 4.

In Flagler County, the use of fireworks is prohibited by ordinance in any county park or recreation area. Personal fireworks also are prohibited by ordinance by the cities

of Palm Coast and Flagler Beach.

How many injuries are caused by fireworks accidents?

According to a 2022 report by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, there has been a significant upward trend in fireworks-related injuries over the past 15 years. From 2006-2021, injuries with fireworks climbed 25% in the United States, according to the commission's estimates.

In 2021, the most recent statistics available, at least nine people died and an estimated 11,500 were injured in incidents involving fireworks.

Among the report's findings:

- Of the nine U.S. deaths, six were associated with firework misuse, one death was associated with a mortar launch malfunction, and two incidents were associated with unknown circumstances.
- There were an estimated 11,500 emergency room-treated injuries involving fireworks in 2021—down from the spike (15,600) experienced in 2020, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many public displays were cancelled.
- An estimated 8,500 fireworks-related injuries (or 74 percent of the total estimated fireworks-related injuries in 2021) occurred during the 1-month special study period between June 18 and July 18 last year.
- Young adults 20 to 24 years of age had the highest estimated rate of emergency department-treated, fireworks-related injuries in 2021.
- In 2021, the parts of the body most often injured by fireworks were hands and fingers (an estimated 31 percent of injuries) along with head, face, and ears (an estimated 21 percent).
- About 32 percent of the emergency department-treated fireworks-related injuries in 2021 were for burns.

Guidelines for fireworks safety

Volusia County Fire Rescue offers these safety tips for consumers who purchase legal fireworks:

- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks, including sparklers.
- Never place any part of your body directly over a fireworks device when lighting the fuse.
- Light fireworks one at a time, then move away from them quickly.
- Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire.
- After fireworks stop burning, douse them with water from a bucket or hose.
- Finally, pick up all debris and spent fireworks.

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