



Veterans, Pets, and Fourth of July Fireworks Don't Mix

As we prepare to commemorate our country's independence on July 4, Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue urges residents to have a heightened awareness of how fireworks impact veterans and pets.

Fireworks produce sounds similar to gunshots, which can cause physical and mental distress to those who have experienced combat. Response to traumatic events vary from person to person but everyone should be mindful and respectful of those who may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Keep in mind that loud fireworks affect the brave men and women who fought and continue to fight for our freedoms.

TVF&R Captain Andrew Klein, who served as a chief warrant officer with the Army National Guard, states: "Unexpected and random loud noises can cause combat veterans to become anxious or initiate a fight-or-flight response. A planned community fireworks display is much more tolerable because it is predictable and is a patriotic-themed celebration of our country."

Fireworks also tend to frighten beloved pets, including farm animals. The loud noises can cause them great anxiety and stress, since they are unable to comprehend what is going on. If you insist on using fireworks, be aware of your own pet(s) and your neighbors' and try to limit the quantity and length of time fireworks will be set off. Rather than lighting fireworks in your neighborhood, where veterans and pets may reside, consider attending a professional show in your area.

Summer weather is also upon us, which means an increased risk of fires. TVF&R offers up the following fireworks safety tips to ensure you have a safe holiday.

If you intend to use fireworks, keep them legal and safe.

Oregon law bans fireworks that fly, explode, or travel on the ground more than six feet — this includes bottle rockets, roman candles, firecrackers, and M80s. To be legal, purchase all fireworks at a licensed Oregon fireworks stand. Fireworks purchased by mail order or in the state of Washington or at a Native American reservation may be illegal in our state.

Just because some fireworks are legal, doesn't mean they're 100 percent safe. This includes sparklers. They can reach temperatures of 1,200 degrees — wood burns at 575 degrees, while glass melts at 900 degrees, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Even legal fireworks are dangerous and can cause injuries and burns.

- Only adults should light or handle fireworks. Supervise children at all times.
- Use fireworks outdoors on a paved surface, away from buildings, vehicles, and vegetation.
- Never try to re-light a "dud." Never point or throw fireworks at people, pets, or buildings.
- Never alter fireworks or make your own.
- Have a hose nearby in case of fire and place "spent" fireworks in a metal bucket with water.

Reporting firework incidents in TVF&R's service area.

Individuals needing to report a fire or medical emergency should call 911; individuals wishing to report a nuisance or concern about illegal fireworks should do so via the non-emergency number, 503-629-0111. These situations will be logged, passed on to local law enforcement, and responded to as resources allow.

Penalties for misusing fireworks.

Law enforcement agencies enforce criminal laws related to the use of illegal fireworks in Oregon. Under Oregon law, officers can seize illegal fireworks and issue criminal citations, including reckless burning, criminal mischief, reckless endangerment, and more with fines up to \$500 per violation. People can also be held civilly liable for damages resulting from improper use of any fireworks — legal or illegal.

For more safety tips, visit www.tvfr.com.

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