

Fireworks - what's legal and what isn't?

A note from the Garfield Fire Department:

We would like to wish everyone a happy and safe Independence Day holiday. Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind while you are enjoying your personal fireworks.

1. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the proper use of your fireworks.
2. Make sure that children are properly supervised when using fireworks. According to the National Fire Protection Association, pre-teens and teenagers face the highest risk for fireworks injuries. In 2002, 62.1% of the people injured by fireworks were under age 20 according to NFPA (www.nfpa.org).
3. Make sure that the area in which you are discharging your fireworks is clear of dry vegetation, shrubs, and other combustibles. The wet month of May and recent hot, dry spell have created very dangerous fire conditions.
4. You might consider soaking your shrubs and any other dry vegetation with a sprinkler to protect against fire from someone else's fireworks. If you're like me, you probably find at least a few spent bottle rockets in your yard at this time of year.
5. Have a charged hose or bucket of water immediately available in case a fire does start.
6. If you start a fire, call the Fire Department immediately. We would much rather respond to a small fire, or even an extinguished fire, than to have you wait until things get completely out of hand.
7. Make sure that the remnants of your fireworks display are completely extinguished before throwing them in your garbage can.

Definitions of legal fireworks

Sparkler: Stick or wire coated with pyrotechnic composition that produces a shower of sparks upon ignition.

Cylindrical Fountain: Cylindrical tubes containing pyrotechnic composition. Upon ignition, a shower of colored sparks and sometimes a whistling effect is produced. This device may be provided with a spike for insertion into the ground [spike fountain], a wood or plastic base for placing on the ground [base fountain], or a wood or cardboard handle if intended to be hand-held [handle fountain].

Cone Fountain: Cardboard or heavy paper cone containing pyrotechnic composition. The effect is the same as that of a cylindrical fountain.

Illuminating Torch: Cylindrical tube containing pyrotechnic composition. Upon ignition, colored fire is produced. May be spike, base or hand-held.

Wheel: Pyrotechnic device attached to a post or tree by means of a nail or string. Each wheel may contain up to six driver units containing pyrotechnic composition. Upon ignition, the wheel revolves producing a shower of color and sparks and, sometimes, a whistling effect.

Ground Spinner: Small device similar to a wheel in design and effect, placed on the ground and ignited. A shower of sparks and color is produced by the rapidly spinning device.

Flitter Sparkler: Narrow paper tube containing pyrotechnic composition which produces color and sparks upon ignition. This device does not have a fuse for ignition. The paper at one end of the tube is ignited to make the device function.

Mine / Shell: Heavy cardboard or paper tube attached to a wood or plastic base containing pyrotechnic composition. Upon ignition "stars" or other devices are propelled into the air. The tube remains on the ground.

Combination items: Firework devices containing a combination of 2 or more of the effects described in this section.

Smoke device: Tube or sphere containing pyrotechnic composition which, upon ignition, produces white or colored smoke as the primary effect.

Helicopter, aerial spinner: A tube containing pyrotechnic composition. A propeller or blade is attached which, upon ignition, lifts the rapidly spinning device into the air. A visible or audible effect is produced at the height of the flight.

Roman candle: Heavy paper or cardboard tube containing pyrotechnic composition. Upon ignition, up to ten "stars" [pellets of pressed pyrotechnic composition that burn with bright color] are individually expelled at several-second intervals.

Definitions of illegal fireworks

Sky rocket (Bottle rocket): Tubes that contain pyrotechnic composition. Sky rockets utilize a wooden stick for guidance and stability and rise into the air upon ignition. A burst of color or noise or both is produced at the height of flight.

Chaser: Small paper or cardboard tube that travels along the ground upon ignition. A whistling effect, or other noise is often produced.

Missile-type rocket: A device similar to a sky rocket in size, composition and effect which uses fins rather than a stick for guidance and stability.

Firecrackers, Salutes: Small, paper-wrapped or cardboard tube containing pyrotechnic composition. Upon ignition, noise and a flash of light are produced.

Revised Code of Washington (RCW's) - Laws governing fireworks

Title 70, chapter 77 of the revised code of Washington governs fireworks (RCW70.77).

Specifically RCW 70.77.395 controls when a person can purchase, possess and discharge legal fireworks.

RCW 70.77.485 states that it is unlawful to possess any class or kind of firework in violation of RCW 70.77, this would include the illegal fireworks listed above.

RCW 70.77.488 states that it is unlawful to discharge or use fireworks in a reckless manner and it makes it a gross misdemeanor to do so.

If you have any questions please feel free to call the police department. You can also search the RCW's coming into city hall.