

# Reminder: Personal fireworks illegal in Lake Tahoe Basin

By Michael D. Brown

Everyone enjoys fireworks during the Fourth of July. The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District would like to remind everyone to enjoy them safely and responsibly. The National Fire Protection Association states that more fires are reported on July 4 than any other day of the year in the United States and more than half of the fires reported are caused by fireworks.



You can enjoy your holiday and the fireworks with just a few simple safety tips for you and your family:

- Leave fireworks to the professionals. Please do not use consumer fireworks (includes sparklers and firecrackers).
- The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public display conducted by professionals.
- Please keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Never leave young children alone with an open flame.
- Teach older children to use fire responsibly.

Fireworks are illegal to possess or discharge in Washoe County or on any U.S. Forest Service property in the Lake Tahoe Basin and elsewhere. This includes all consumer fireworks (fireworks purchased by individuals) known as "safe and sane" brought in from out of state. The use of consumer fireworks can lead to devastating burns, other injuries, fires and even death. Not

only are safety precautions a concern, the cost of suppression and any other injury or liability caused by fireworks is the direct responsibility of those persons using fireworks.

Anyone with fireworks may turn them into any fire station in any fire district without penalty at any time.

The National Fire Protection Association reported that in 2009 fireworks caused an estimated 18,000 reported fires, including 1,300 structure fires, 400 vehicle fires and 16,300 outside and other fires. These fires resulted in an estimated \$38 million in direct property damage.

On Independence Day in a typical year fireworks cause more outdoor fires in the United States than all other causes of outdoor fire combined. This emphasizes the fact that consumer fireworks are dangerous, especially with children and teens present. NFPA states that the risk of fireworks injury was highest for children ages 10–14, with more than twice the risk for the general population.

Please teach children that fireworks are not toys. Explain the dangers and ask your children to tell an adult if they find fireworks or another child playing with them.

Remember to use extra caution this 4th of July holiday. Please extinguish cigarettes in proper designated receptacles and leave the fireworks to the professionals. Left to the professionals, fireworks can be a spectacular way to enjoy your 4th of July celebration.

*Michael D. Brown is fire chief of North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District.*