Fireworks Myths De-Bunked

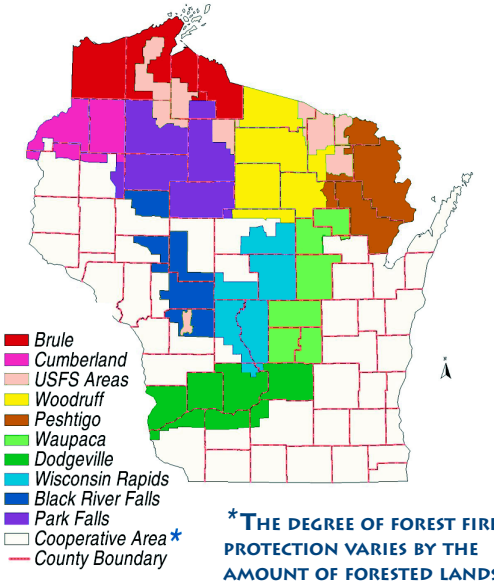
(Appellate Court Rulings and Attorney General's Opinion)

Sales of restricted fireworks to nonresidents. There is no exception to permit requirements for out-of-state residents. Fireworks may only be sold to persons outside this state if the fireworks are shipped to the buyer's out of state location.

Sales of restricted fireworks to residents. Individuals cannot obtain or use permits on behalf of any group unless they are officers or directors of that group. A general membership, particularly one purchased at a fireworks stand at the time of purchase does not permit a member to use the group's permit and is in violation of Wisconsin Law.

Remember: Always have an adult present when handling sparklers.

Wisconsin DNR Forest Fire Protection Areas



*The degree of forest fire protection varies by the amount of forested lands and hazards present in the different parts of the state. Cooperative Forest Fire Protection Areas contain the least amount of these risk factors. There are no DNR suppression resources in Coop areas and town chairpersons have the responsibility for forest fires in cooperation with DNR.

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Cover photo provided by Wisconsin Tourism. 00140064 Fireworks, July 4th, Riverfest Park, La Crosse.

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Fireworks Cause Forest fires and More . . .

The Problem

Decades of tragic experience teach this lesson: Amateur use of fireworks are dangerous!

Fireworks burn hot, some explode and leave little or no margin for safety when things go wrong.

In truth, that is part of the excitement….in truth, that is most of the problem!

Based on an eleven-year average from the National Fire Protection Association, statistics show over 32,000 fires occur annually due to the mishandling of fireworks. Of this total, 90% are most likely to occur in the outdoors. Furthermore, over 3000 structures and vehicles will be lost, which leads to costing the general public over $30 million dollars in property damage alone. (*Source: 7/98 National Fire Protection Association)*

Photo by Joe Sprenger

This photo shows a firework caused fire in Polk County in October of 2000. A juvenile shot a Roman Candle out of the upstairs window of the house. Photo provided by DNR field staff.

The number of fires started from fireworks each year is staggering, when understanding that most occur during the short July 4th period. Individual states' experience is proportional to use. A greater share of the problems exist where fireworks are available. In Wisconsin, where firework use is highly restricted, the following graph depicts firework caused forest fires in areas of DNR Fire Protection, which represents only about half of the land coverage in the State (see map on back of brochure).

In Wisconsin, it is important to note that most firework use occurs during July 4th when forest fire danger is usually Low or Moderate. Consequently, forest fire starts are in direct correlation to fire danger. During the drought summers of 1987 and 88, firework caused fires spiked. 55 of the 113 fires in 1987 occurred in a single county where illegal firework sales were rampant. More disturbing is the growing trend of firework sales occurring during the dangerous months of April and May. During this time, the fire risk caused by firework use is greatly increased due to dry conditions.

Injuries

Hospital emergency rooms around the country treat over 10,000 people annually injured by fireworks. However, due to the fact that various other injuries are not treated in emergency rooms, experts believe the total numbers are much worse! *(Source: 1998 NFPA)*

Children suffer the majority of fireworks injuries, most frequently burns and injuries to the eyes and hands. How do fireworks get into the hands of children? The unfortunate case is many adults equate legal with safe. It isn't so! Small children should never handle any fireworks! Furthermore, many adults are confused about what types of fireworks are indeed legal to purchase and use and what are not.

Legal Or Not?

A more accurate term is **restricted** or not. The more contentious fireworks for causing injuries and fires are those that explode or move erratically, at times, hundreds of feet from where they are discharged. Fireworks that leave the ground or blow into pieces, may not be possessed or used without a valid permit. Fireworks that "go or blow," such as firecrackers, bottle rockets and roman candles, are **restricted**.

Although all fireworks are extremely dangerous, the following are examples of commonly known fireworks that are **restricted** throughout the State of Wisconsin:

A permit is required from the Town Chair, Village President or City Mayor to discharge these types of devices from the location where the possession or use is to occur. Permits are not for individual use and must state when and where the fireworks will be discharged. An elected official may only issue fireworks permits to civic organizations and other groups for use at a specific time and place. Valid permits must be obtained prior to the purchase of the fireworks.

Unrestricted, no permit required "fireworks" include smoke producing devices, fountains and sparklers. These are the **only** "fireworks" allowed for sale without a permit in Wisconsin.