

EDITORIAL: Do your part to keep a dry Fresno safe on July 4

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The Fresno Bee Editorial Board



Do your part to keep the Valley safe from fire on July 4 by only using certified Safe and Sane fireworks.

JOHN WALKER — Fresno Bee Staff Photo [Buy Photo](#)

It already has been a long, hot summer for the Fresno Fire Department. The San Joaquin Valley is bone dry because of the drought. And Fire Chief Kerri Donis says that our city almost certainly is being hit by serial arsonists.

We've seen historic buildings burn under suspicious conditions, and fields set ablaze. Early Tuesday morning a fire ripped through a furniture store at Blackstone and Michigan avenues, destroying a tattoo shop next door. In all, more than 20 fires could be the result of arson.

With firefighters pushed to the limit, the last thing Fresno needs over the next several days is for kids and adults to be careless with Fourth of July fireworks.

All fireworks were illegal inside the Fresno city limits for 76 years. Then the City Council and then-Mayor Jim Patterson legalized the "safe and sane" variety in 2000 for a few days around the Fourth of July. Later, to bring the city into line with neighboring jurisdictions, it was decided to allow Fresnans to ignite legal fireworks 365 days a year.

This freedom to celebrate our nation's independence with fireworks is accompanied by grave responsibility. Follow the law, read fireworks instructions and take extra steps to ensure that no one is harmed or fires are started.

Unfortunately, safe and sane fireworks don't satisfy the pyrotechnic urges in some people; sprinklers and fountains are too tame for them. So they break the law with firecrackers and bottle rockets — and put our community at serious risk. On any Fourth of July night, you can see fireworks from bottle rockets and Roman candles lighting the Fresno sky.

For a lot of people, July 4 involves toasting America's independence with alcoholic beverages. This combination of alcohol and fireworks is potentially lethal, never mind the millions of dollars in damage that could be caused.

Give our firefighters a break. Protect yourself, loved ones and neighbors. The thrill of breaking the law or seeing colors momentarily paint the heavens is hardly worth consequences that include losing an eye, scarring a child or burning a building.

Use a water hose and bucket to douse spent or "dud" fireworks. Provide adult supervision at all times. Call (559) 621-7000 to report illegal fireworks.

Remember, there is a \$1,250 fine for the possession or use of illegal fireworks, and both police officers and firefighters will be checking things out throughout the city Friday night.

Have a happy — and safe — Fourth of July.

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