



Crazy Ray's Fireworks

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January 21, 2021

City of Stevenson
7121 E. Loop Road
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Stevenson, WA 98648

RE: Public Hearing, Fireworks

Honorable Council and Mayor Anderson;

In late 2020 a (then) council member brought the idea to discuss banning the use of consumer fireworks within city limits to his colleagues. The council decided to take this up on their agenda and have scheduled a public hearing to occur on Thursday, January 21, 2021.

As is likely evident our small business is a seasonal, retail outlet for consumer fireworks; meaning this discussion and any actions considered or decisions made will have a tremendous impact on us. With this in mind, we have worked tirelessly to review the results of the survey released by the City and bring you some important information related to this issue. We hope you will take the time necessary to consider this information and take an informed, reasonable approach to this matter.

First and foremost, we would like to address the responses to three key questions in the survey developed by the City. The data we will be referencing here is specific to the answers provided by residents or property owners within the city limits, of which there were 172 respondents.

Question 9 asks "What is your level of concern, if any, about the personal use and discharge of fireworks in the City of Stevenson?" More than one-half of respondents (64%) were not concerned or only somewhat concerned about personal use of fireworks within the city limits.

Question 10 asks "Reasons for those who are somewhat or very concerned." Respondents had options to choose more than one reason, and collectively greater than 50% of the reasons for concern could be addressed through existing City ordinances or state law (e.g. current ordinances and law regarding littering, property damages, use of illegal fireworks, etc.)

Question 11 asks "What actions would you prioritize to mitigate your concern?" Only 51 respondents chose "a complete ban of fireworks." as opposed to 120 respondents who chose other options, such as "no action", "mandatory cleanup of debris" and "other."

Considering the responses to these three questions, the constituency does not support a ban on the use of consumer fireworks.

Nonetheless, we feel it is important for us to provide additional information and help the Council understand that there are more than enough regulations to address neighborly concerns.

Let's address existing laws related to fireworks in Washington state. RCW 70.77 is the state fireworks law and address use, public displays, importing, wholesale and retail sales. It goes on to address licensing, storage, manufacturing and more.

These laws allow retail sales and use of consumer fireworks (on non-tribal land) as follows:

DATE	MAY BE SOLD/PURCHASED	MAY BE USED/DISCHARGED
June 28	Noon – 11 pm	Noon – 11 pm
June 29 – July 3	9 am – 11 pm	9 am – 11 pm
July 4	9 am – 11 pm	9 am – Midnight
July 5	9 am – 11 pm	9 am – 11 pm
December 27 – 30	Noon – 11 pm	May not be discharged
December 31	Noon – 11 pm	6 pm – 1 am (January 1)

Source: Municipal Research and Services Center, Washington (www.mrsc.org)

In Washington State, the following fireworks are *illegal* to sell (on non-tribal land). With very limited exceptions, and with a special permit issued by the local fire official, firecrackers, salutes and chasers may be used when purchased from a wholesale distributor. Otherwise, retailers may not sell them, and consumers may not use them.

Which fireworks are illegal in our state?

These are listed as Consumer Fireworks but are illegal to sell, possess, and/or discharge within the State of Washington. They are legal to sell, possess, and/or discharge on tribal lands.

Firecrackers

Generally 1/4" x 1 1/2" or less that come in packs to large bricks. A firecracker makes a single "pop" sound. Many firecrackers strung together will make repetitive "popping" sounds.



Bottle Rockets

A firecracker type (tube) attached to a 12" long wooden stick. The stick is placed in a bottle and once lit, it rises into the air, travelling laterally before exploding.

Sky Rockets and Missiles

Similar to the Bottle Rocket, a Sky Rocket is attached to a stick or has fins and may have a plastic cap. A missile will have fins rather than a stick. Once lit, it ascends rapidly, high into the air where it explodes.

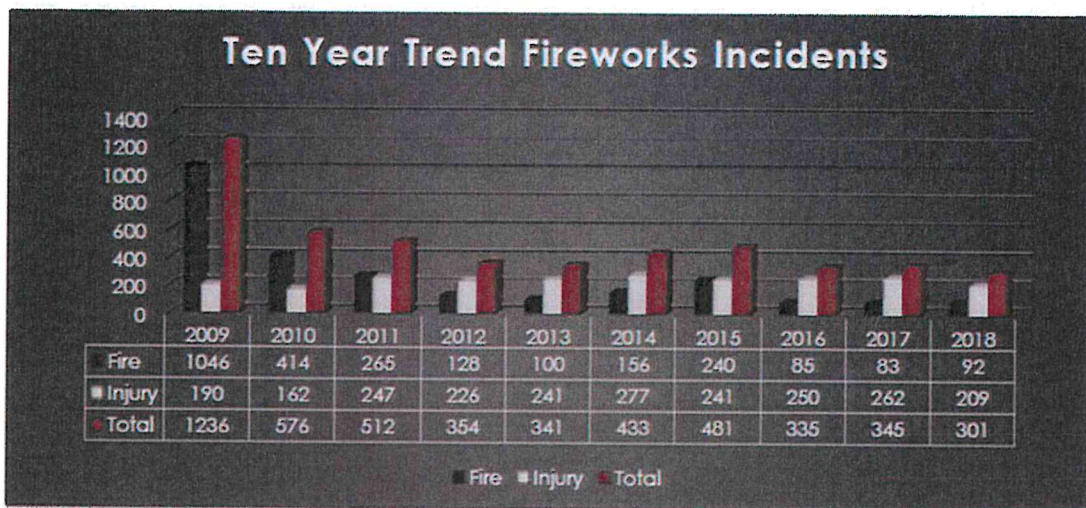


Source: Washington State Patrol, Fire Marshal (www.wsp.wa.gov)

As a licensed retailer of consumer fireworks, we are required to post this notice at our sales establishment. Not only do we post this notice, and the regulated hours for sales and use (as listed above), but we work diligently to educate consumers on how to safely enjoy fireworks as a part of their holiday celebrations.

Further, data available from the Washington State Patrol indicates that many of the immediate concerns typically brought up when discussing fireworks bans (e.g. fire, injury to persons) have not been an issue in our county.

The chart below, as clipped from the 2018 and 2019 Fire in Washington Report shows the ten-year trend for fireworks incidents continues to decline and goes on to show a summary of incident reports received (Skamania County) by county agency and type.



2018 Reports by Agency:

County	Fire Department			Fire District			Hospital		Grand Total
	Fire	Injury	Total	Fire	Injury	Total	Injury	Total	
2018 Skamania	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
2019 Skamania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

As the Council considers our information and comments from other community members, please remember it is easy for the complaints and concerns to overtake a discussion and for one to lose sight of the positive aspects surrounding the use of consumer fireworks as a part of the holiday celebrations in our community. We would like to offer a few examples:

1. After five years in business, we have established a report with our customers and know that many of them travel to Stevenson specifically for Independence Day, lodging overnight at local hotels, enjoying the chance to light off fireworks at the Port and staying for the public display at the Fairgrounds.

2. Many of our customers are neighbors who get together to celebrate the holidays and pool their fireworks to create a unique display. They get to enjoy each other's company and build neighborly relationships.
3. All of our customers appreciate the safety guidelines we recommend and our consistent delivery of the legal sales and use periods; and we firmly believe they help to spread these safety messages to others.

In closing, we hope the Council sees that piling more regulations on top of the existing law will only serve to confuse consumers, and it is our opinion that a more appropriate avenue would be engagement through a public education campaign. We believe most people are respectful and safe, and that those who choose to ignore the existing law will pay no better attention to new ones. Yet, through education and encouragement from those who enjoy their freedom and fireworks, we can continue a culture of celebrating safely.

Sincerely,



Ray & Ann Lueders

Managers, Crazy Ray's Fireworks
