



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Fire Marshal Offers Safety Tips Ahead of Independence Day Holiday

BATON ROUGE- As another fireworks sales season begins, the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFM) wants to encourage all Louisiana residents to not only be safe when using fireworks, but knowledgeable when buying them and prepared if considering attending a public fireworks display during this pandemic.

Ordinarily, the SFM would encourage families to choose to enjoy public fireworks displays over creating their own. However, many public fireworks displays are either being canceled or altered due to the concerns over COVID-19. In the event a public display is still being offered in your area, and your family is considering attending, we strongly encourage every member of your household to wear face coverings, to provide your own seating and to ensure that seating is spaced six feet from the nearest individual or group of individuals.

If your family has, instead, chosen to purchase fireworks in order to stay safer at home, know that there is no prohibition on the sale of retail fireworks at the state level as a result of COVID-19. However, state law does still require wholesale and retail fireworks business operators to be appropriately licensed by the SFM in the parishes and municipalities where they are legally allowed. The sales season extends through July 4th.

A retail fireworks business falls under the Phase 2 guidance for "Shopping Malls/Retail Stores," which details requirements such as a maximum limit of 50% of the total capacity of the structure or tent while maintaining a social distance of six feet between employees and customers, as well as explicit sanitation requirements. The full guidance can be accessed on OpenSafely.la.gov. For businesses that operate with counter sales only, where fireworks are displayed and sold from behind a counter, requirements include maintaining a distance of six feet between customers and the wearing of face masks by employees when interacting with customers. Owners should also maintain access to hand sanitizer for employees engaged in sales which require the handling of money, credit cards, etc.

Lastly, we want everyone to enjoy fireworks in the safest way possible. According to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), fireworks started an estimated 19,500 fires in 2018, including 1,900 structure fires, 500 vehicle fires, and 17,100 outside and other fires. These fires caused five deaths, 46 civilian injuries, and \$105 million in direct property damage.

To avoid becoming part of these statistics, the SFM advises:

- Detonating devices at least 200 feet away from structures, vehicles and rubbish
- Never allowing children to light fireworks
- Never operating fireworks while impaired
- Lighting devices one at a time and monitoring embers released with a bucket of water or hose nearby
- Discarding detonated items by wetting them down to prevent reignition and not disposing of them in a trash container immediately

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