

City of Alpena

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CAUTION URGED WITH FIREWORKS USE

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Many people celebrate the Independence Day holiday with fireworks. The best and safest way to do so, is to attend a public fireworks display conducted by licensed pyrotechnics professionals. Thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Alpena Chamber of Commerce, this years Alpena 4th of July Fireworks Show at Mich-e-ke-wis Park is going to be outstanding!

For those who prefer to light their own consumer fireworks, Fire officials urge caution. The National Fire Protection Association tracks national fireworks statistics and offers the following insight:

- Fireworks cause an average of 20,000 reported fires per year, including 1,200 structure fires, 400 vehicle fires, and 16,300 outside and other fires. In 2011, these fires resulted in an estimated eight reported civilian deaths, 40 civilian injuries, and \$32 million in direct property damage.
- Each year, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treat an estimated 11,000 people for fireworks related injuries, and several people are killed in consumer fireworks accidents each year..
- On Independence Day in a typical year, far more U.S. fires are reported than on any other day, and

fireworks account for two out of five of those fires, more than any other cause of fires.

The Alpena City fireworks ordinance permits use of consumer fireworks on Sunday July 3, Monday July 4 and Tuesday July 5 in accordance with state law. **Use of consumer fireworks at all other times is prohibited within the City**, in the interest of safety, and to preserve peace and enjoyment for residents and pets that are often negatively affected by fireworks use.

On the three days in which consumer fireworks are permitted, such use is restricted to between the hours of 8 am and 1 am.

The ordinance further clarifies that fireworks cannot be ignited without the express written permission of the property owner, and cannot be used by persons under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances. **Use of consumer fireworks on City property, including parks and beaches during the 4th of July celebration, is prohibited at all times.**

“Consumer fireworks” are those that leave the ground or explode with a loud noise. Less intrusive “low-impact” fireworks including sparklers, snakes and most fountains remain legal all year round.

“Sky Lanterns” or “Chinese Lanterns” are banned within the City at all times. Chinese lanterns are paper or plastic balloons that incorporate a fuel cell, which is ignited to heat the air in the balloon causing it to rise. In theory, the balloon will remain aloft until the fire goes out and the air cools. In reality, the balloons often become tangled in trees or power lines or land – still on fire – on houses and other combustibles. Use of Chinese lanterns has been quite a problem at the Alpena 4th of July fireworks celebration, and on two occasions balloons

landed on unexploded commercial fireworks being prepared for the public display.

Under the ordinance, possession, sale or use of such devices is a civil infraction and punishable by up to a \$500 fine. More daunting though, is Michigan law stating that a person starting a fire through carelessness – such as use of a Chinese lantern or firework – can be held responsible for all damage and the costs of extinguishing the blaze.