

# City of Alpena

## News Release of July 1, 2015



### CAUTION URGED WITH HOLIDAY FIREWORKS USE

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 year's Alpena 4<sup>th</sup> 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:

- In 2011, fireworks caused an estimated 17,800 reported fires, including 1,200 total structure fires, 400 vehicle fires, and 16,300 outside and other fires. These fires resulted in an estimated eight reported civilian deaths, 40 civilian injuries and \$32 million in direct property damage.
- In 2012, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 8,700 people for fireworks related injuries; 55% of 2012 emergency room fireworks-related injuries were to the extremities and 31% were to the head.

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- The risk of fireworks injury was highest for young people ages 15-24, followed by children under 10.
- 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 new Alpena City fireworks ordinance permits use of consumer fireworks on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday this week because of the holiday.

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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

Another significant aspect of the ordinance is the outright ban on “Sky” or “Chinese Lanterns” within the City. 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 – can be held responsible for all damage and the costs of extinguishing the blaze.