



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council
FROM: Council Staff
RE: Fireworks Regulations
DATE: June 1, 2026

Current Regulations

Fireworks are regulated through [Chapter 70.77 RCW](#) with hours and discharge periods limited by [RCW 70.77.395](#) as shown below.

State Fireworks Law RCW 70.77.395

Holiday	Date	Sales Period	Discharge Period
Independence Day 4th of July	June 28	12 p.m. to 11 p.m.	12 p.m. to 11 p.m.
	June 29 to July 3	9 a.m. to 11 p.m.	9 a.m. to 11 p.m.
	July 4	9 a.m. to 11 p.m.	9 a.m. to 12 a.m. midnight
	July 5	9 a.m. to 9 p.m.	9 a.m. to 11 p.m.
New Year's Day	December 27 to 30	12 p.m. to 11 p.m.	No Discharge
	December 31	12 p.m. to 11 p.m.	6 p.m. to 12 a.m. midnight
	January 1	No Sales	12 a.m. midnight to 1 a.m.

A local jurisdiction may adopt legislation that is more restrictive than state law but cannot adopt legislation that is less restrictive than state law. State law does not apply on tribal lands (see Washington Attorney General opinion [1962 No. 129](#)).

[RCW 70.77.250\(4\)](#) requires that any locally adopted legislation more restrictive than the state's must have an effective date at least one year after its adoption. Thus, if a city or county wishes to restrict the sale or use of fireworks within its jurisdiction in 2027, it must take legislative action no later than June 28, 2026.

Whatcom County

Whatcom County adopted additional fireworks regulations beyond state law in 2015. [Ordinance 2015-026](#) restricted the firework discharge period to be more restrictive than state law:

- Between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. on July 3rd
- Between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 12:00 midnight on July 4th
- Between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. on July 5th
- Between the hours of 6:00 p.m. on December 31st and 1:00 a.m. on January 1st of the subsequent year, and as provided in RCW [70.77.311](#) (follows state law)

Additionally, [Ordinance 2015-038](#) established [WCC 5.20.105](#) related to burn bans and emergency conditions as shown below:

5.20.105 Special circumstances.

If/when Whatcom County issues a ban on outdoor burning or if/when other extenuating emergency conditions exist, all discharge of private fireworks may be prohibited until the ban is lifted or the emergency condition(s) are mitigated or cease to exist, at the discretion of and by order of the county executive, in coordination with the county fire marshal and the county sheriff. (Ord. 2015-038 Exh. A).

Fireworks Sales

[WCC 5.20.090](#) limits the period of sale for fireworks to:

- Noon on June 28th to noon on July 6th
- No sales are allowed between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. on any day

This subsection, established in 1993, is out of compliance with state law as it is now less restrictive than state law (allowing sales on July 6 and sales between 8:00 and 9:00 am June 29 to July 5 where state law does not). In practice, this means that the allowable sales period for fireworks defaults to state law as shown on page 1.

Other Permits

Fireworks sales and shows outside of the Fourth of July and New Year's Eve periods require a [Fire System Construction Application](#) through the Fire Marshal's office.

Penalties

[RCW 70.77](#) provides for penalties for fireworks violations that range from civil infractions with fines exceeding \$500 to criminal charges, including misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors punishable by up to one year in jail and \$5,000 in fines.

[WCC 5.20.130 Violation – Penalties](#) addresses violations of WCC 5.20 by referring to a section of code that no longer exists. This subsection needs to be updated.

Other Jurisdictions

Other Washington jurisdictions have also created their own regulations beyond state law. The below chart shows the rules for each city in Whatcom County:

County/City	4th of July Sales Period	4th of July Discharge Period	Winter Sales	Winter Discharge
Whatcom	Follows State Law	July 3, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. July 4, 6 p.m. to 12 a.m. July 5, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.	Banned	Follows State Law
Bellingham	Banned	Banned	Banned	Banned
Blaine	July 1 to July 4, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.	July 4, 10 a.m. to 12 a.m.	Banned	Banned
Everson	June 28, 12 p.m. to 11 p.m. June 29th to July 3, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. July 4, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.	July 3, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. July 4, 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. July 5, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.	Banned	Follows State Law
Ferndale	July 1 to July 4, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.	July 4, 9 a.m. to 12 a.m.	Banned	Follows State Law
Lynden	Follows State Law	July 1 to July 3, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. July 4, 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. July 5, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.	Follows State Law	Follows State Law
Nooksack	June 28, 12 p.m. to 11 p.m. June 29 to July 3, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. July 4, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.	July 3, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. July 4, 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. July 5, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.	Banned	Dec. 31 to Jan. 1, 6 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Sumas	Follows State Law	Follows State Law	Follows State Law	Follows State Law

Some cities also have different regulations for different parts of the city. For example, Blaine prohibits the discharge of fireworks in West Blaine including the entire Semiahmoo spit, the Blaine Harbor area and adjacent water bodies, and public parks and public property (not including public streets).

Neighboring counties and cities have also created their own regulations, some of which are stricter than state law. In 2019, the Prevention Division of the Washington State Fire Protection Bureau released a [document outlining fireworks bans and restrictions](#) in Washington State counties and cities. While some jurisdictions may have updated their regulations since 2019, this document provides a good overview of the different restrictions.

Several counties have completely banned the sale and discharge of fireworks including [Chelan](#), [Franklin](#), [King](#), [Okanogan](#), [San Juan](#), [Spokane](#), and [Yakima](#). In some cases, parties may obtain a permit to release fireworks for special events.

Impacts of Fireworks

Fireworks are a celebratory tradition and help bring families and communities together; however, they also create many negative health, environmental, and safety impacts.

Public Safety – Fireworks are the cause of thousands of injuries every year throughout the country. Based on the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s [2023 Fireworks Annual Report](#):

- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission staff have reports of 159 fireworks-related deaths between 2008 and 2023, for an average of 9.9 deaths per year (p. 12)
- In 2023, there were an estimated 9,700 fireworks-related emergency department-treated injuries (p. 13)

- In 2023, children under 5 years of age accounted for 9% of fireworks-related injuries and children younger than 15 accounted for 32% (p.20)

The public safety impacts can also be seen in Whatcom County. For example, over the July 4, 2024 holiday, officials at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center in Bellingham [reported](#) at least seven people visited the hospital with fireworks-related injuries.

Public Health – Fireworks release [particulate matter](#), a mixture of microscopic solid particles and liquid droplets, which can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream. Fireworks also [deposit a range of heavy metals](#) into soil, air, and water – metals from fireworks can be inhalable and therefore pose an immediate health risk to people. According to the [American Lung Association](#), firework smoke can significantly pollute the air which can be harmful to our lungs. Exposure to air pollution has been shown to increase cases of chronic cough and other lung diseases and to exacerbate symptoms of asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Fireworks can be a trauma reminder for those who served in combat or went through a fire, explosion, or gun violence. Fireworks are loud, with bright flashes of light, creating smoke and burning smells. Any of these sounds, sights, or smells may serve as trauma reminders. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition experienced by many people who have experienced trauma that can be [triggered](#) by fireworks events.

Fires - According to the [National Fire Protection Association](#), fireworks started an estimated 32,302 fires in the U.S. in 2023, including 3,760 structure fires, 849 vehicle fires, 27,252 outside fires, and 441 unclassified fires. These fires caused an estimated \$142 million in direct property damage. Wildfires can be destructive to personal and commercial property, public safety, wildlife, and ecological health. In Washington State alone, fireworks caused 271 fires in 2024 according to the [Washington State Fire Marshal's Office](#). The 2017 Eagle Creek Fire, which burned almost 50,000 acres in and around the Columbia River Gorge over a three-month period, is an example of a destructive event started by fireworks.

Public Services – Fireworks can cause a surge in calls for emergency medical services around the July Fourth holiday. They also significantly increase the risk of fires, demanding immediate response from fire departments to control structure and wildland fires. In 2025, local Whatcom County fire departments responded to [68 fire- and fireworks-related calls](#) over the Fourth of July weekend including 37 grass fires, 23 outside fires (campfires, trash cans, etc.), 2 structure fires (sheds, decks, docks, etc.), 1 vehicle fire call, and 4 for reported firework injuries.

Animal Welfare – Fireworks often have an outsized impact on local wildlife, farm animals, and pets. The abrupt lights and sounds are often seen as a threat that cause wildlife to flee, ending up in unexpected areas or roadways, with birds flying into buildings and other obstacles and even abandoning nests, leaving young vulnerable to predators ([U.S. Fish and Wildlife](#)). Additionally, household pets experience sounds at far greater intensities than humans do, which often makes fireworks traumatic for many pets and pet owners.

The Whatcom County Humane Society executive director reported that during times of heavy firework usage, there is an increased call volume and number of animals received. From July 2 through 8, 2025, there were 56 stray domestic animals received (compared to 37 from August 2 to 8) and 66 wild animals received, including six stranded marine mammals.

Farm animals face the same stress and fears related to fireworks but cannot be brought inside to alleviate their panic. Farm animals often try to flee or escape, and may try to break through fences and gates, potentially leading to injuries.

Environment – When fireworks explode, they release harmful gases and metals including sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, aluminum, manganese, and cadmium. Chemical debris is left scattered across the ground. [Perchlorates](#), highly soluble salts that contribute to the explosions and light associated with fireworks, leach into marine and freshwater bodies and are taken up by plants, which are then consumed by insects, mammals, amphibians and fish. Perchlorates inhibit thyroid function in amphibians, reptiles and mammals, decreasing thyroid hormone output, and also has a role in causing reproductive, neurodevelopmental, developmental, immunotoxic, and carcinogenic issues. A [2015 study](#) found that air pollution levels increased by an average of 42% on the Fourth of July.

Garbage – Once the excitement of fireworks displays is over, communities are saddled with tons of debris from empty wrapping and cases that are left behind, as well as garbage abandoned by the public at viewing sites. Whatcom County [public beaches are particularly hard hit](#). Materials left behind after the boom often contain hazardous materials that leach into beaches, land, and water. In 2025, just under [6 tons of garbage](#) was cleaned from the beach at Birch Bay following the Fourth of July, 25% more than 2024.