

From the Mayor ...

July 3, 2019

Summer has finally arrived and our city departments are very involved with busy schedules of construction, road maintenance, and outdoor projects. Our employees work hard to take advantage and schedule outdoor work that coincides with the limitations of our midwestern climate. I'm sure the Fourth of July holiday will provide a little rest and relaxation for our city employees, as well as all of our local residents.

Independence Day is a great patriotic celebration at the perfect time of year to be outdoors. Family and friends gather in the hot summer season to swim, picnic, and enjoy the red, white, and blue! The holiday is punctuated by celebrations that culminate with spectacular fireworks over Winona Lake, synchronized with patriotic music! My family loves this holiday!

From the city perspective, it may be useful to discuss a few issues that will ensure a safe and enjoyable holiday for everyone.

Public fireworks displays are all regulated by Indiana code and overseen by the State Fire Marshal. Qualified operators require permits, proof of insurance, and advance notification. Good preparation improves safety and limits concerns.

Consumer fireworks, on the other hand, can be used by anyone over the age of 18 and have recently been regulated by state statute.

In the "old days," sparklers and snakes were about the only approved consumer fireworks that could be used in Indiana. "Legal Fireworks" stands could sell firecrackers, rockets, roman candles, etc., but consumers couldn't use them. We all know what happened. Big boomers, roman candles, and "quarter miler rockets" came from every backyard in the neighborhood.

The State then decided to control the use of consumer fireworks and passed the current statute, IC 22-11-14, that regulates them. In essence, consumer fireworks now sold at a stand must meet the requirements of the statute. The State Fire Marshal also oversees the sale of these fireworks. Typically, these may contain no more than 50 mg of powder for a ground device and 130 mg for an aerial device. The definition of each type of approved legal consumer fireworks can be easily found by simply "Googling" IC 22 11 14.

Consumer fireworks may only be sold to individuals 18 years of age or older. They may only be used on the purchaser's property or other property in which the owner has given permission for their use.

The times that consumer fireworks are allowed to be used are listed in IC 22-11-14-10.5. On July 4th, they may be used no later than midnight. On June 29, 30 and July

1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, they may be used no later than two hours after sunset. On December 31, no later than 1:00 am (on January 1).

What all of this means is that safety and a little common sense is paramount. Injuries seem to happen when excitement gets in the way of good judgment. Also, respect for neighbors' sleeping schedules is common courtesy. Be mindful of everyone's needs by using fireworks safely and responsibly!

Have a happy and safe Fourth of July!