



# RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707) 833-2553 • [www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)

**“Your Watershed”**  
***by the Russian River Watershed Association***

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## **Safe Use of Fireworks and Proper Disposal**

People of all ages thoroughly enjoy fireworks on the Fourth of July, but it is important to remember that fireworks can be dangerous. Improper use of fireworks can cause severe injuries, especially to children. Fireworks can also cause structure fires and wildfires. The safest and most environmentally sound way to enjoy fireworks this coming Fourth of July is to leave fireworks to the professionals by attending one of the public fireworks displays put on throughout the County. There will be public fireworks displays in Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Sonoma, Sebastopol, Cloverdale, Bodega Bay, Monte Rio, and Guerneville. These public displays are bigger and brighter than any display you can do on your own.

If you choose to do your own fireworks display, remember that fireworks are not legal in every community. In Sonoma County, the sale and use of fireworks is limited to Rohnert Park, Petaluma, Sebastopol, and Cloverdale. Using fireworks in any other part of Sonoma County, including the unincorporated areas, is illegal. All fireworks are illegal in Mendocino County.

Here are some simple steps you can take to enjoy the Fourth of July and still stay safe:

- Read and follow all safety instructions before lighting fireworks.
- Only adults should light fireworks.
- Only buy legal fireworks from reliable firework sellers.
- Light fireworks outdoors in a safe area, such as a driveway or other paved surface.
- Light fireworks one at a time, and never lean over the fireworks once lit. Fireworks should never be held or thrown.
- Stand far away from lit fireworks even if they have not yet gone off.
- Keep fireworks away from vegetated areas, or areas with combustibles.
- Never attempt to relight or alter malfunctioning fireworks. After allowing malfunctioning fireworks to stand for at least 15 minutes, soak in a pail of water for several hours before discarding the fireworks in the garbage.
- Never ignite fireworks in any container, especially glass or metal.
- Keep a hose and bucket of water nearby.
- Sparklers should be immersed in a bucket of sand to cool down after burning out, as they remain very hot for some time.



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Fireworks should be disposed of safely and properly. Besides being a fire hazard, fireworks can be a danger to humans, animals, and the environment because of the chemicals and heavy metals they contain such as barium, magnesium, copper, strontium, chlorate and perchlorate. The materials used to make fireworks can be toxic and can contaminate ground and surface water. Don't leave spent fireworks in the street as these can be blown or washed into the storm drain system, where they can ultimately pollute streams, rivers and ocean waters. Ensure legal fireworks waste is properly extinguished, dousing with water if necessary, and disposing of the waste in your garbage receptacle. Contact your local fire department regarding any found illegal fireworks. Illegal fireworks often come in unmarked packages and can contain banned chemicals. Check with your local fire department regarding options for disposal of unspent fireworks, as these items can be dangerous if not properly stored.

Check your local newspaper for information on professional firework displays in your community. Information can also be found on the websites of the participating cities, the Sonoma County Tourism Bureau website [www.sonomacounty.com](http://www.sonomacounty.com) and the Mendocino County Visitors Bureau website [www.gomendo.com](http://www.gomendo.com). Do your part to be safe and environmentally conscious this Fourth of July holiday.

*This article was authored by Lisa Steinman from the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency on behalf of RRWA. RRWA ([www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement*