

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Fireworks Displays

Many tribes allow their property to be used for firework displays. These displays normally take place during graduations, homecomings and Fourth of July celebrations. Tribal First strongly urges clients to utilize professional pyrotechnic companies for firework displays. By utilizing a professional company the district can contractually require them to obtain all licenses and permits and to follow all federal, state, local laws and industry standards.

There are two classifications of fireworks, consumer and display. Consumer fireworks are most commonly sold at neighborhood stands during the Fourth of July season. Display Fireworks are used in large community displays run by licensed professionals and are not intended for use by consumers.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has compiled the following list of safety guidelines designed to advise display fireworks operators of safe operations:

Pre-Display Approval Checklist

- Obtain required Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) licenses and permits.
- Obtain Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval if close to an airport or heliport.
- Submit required applications to the State and/or local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) and obtain necessary approval, licenses and permits. Minimum items to address include:
 - Qualified operator in charge
 - Properly trained assistants
 - Site layout with proper separation distances
 - Event description
 - Firing procedures
 - Termination procedures
 - Emergency procedures
- Arrange for inspections required by State/local AHJ or Federal authorities.
- Obtain approval from appropriate authorities to close roads or restrict access.
- Arrange for fire service and EMS to be available for the display.
- Obtain the required or appropriate insurance.

Pre-Display Site Checklist

- Establish site security prior to arrival of pyrotechnic materials.
- Verify all fireworks are legal. The manufacturer's name and cautionary labeling are required by law.
- Protect all fireworks, pyrotechnic materials, and launching equipment from inclement weather and keep them dry at all times.
- Prohibit smoking material, matches, lighters or open flames within 50 feet of fireworks or pyrotechnic material.
- Only necessary personnel required to perform the display set up and show shall be allowed at the display site.
- Prohibit persons in the display site who are under the influence of alcohol, narcotics, or medication that could adversely affect judgment, mobility, or stability.
- No cell phones or radio frequency (RF) generating devices are permitted within the immediate discharge area while electrically ignited fireworks or pyrotechnic devices are prepared, loaded, or set up.

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

- Wear all personal protective equipment appropriate for setup duties.
- Verify that all mortars and racks are made of approved materials, and are of sufficient strength, length and durability to allow shells to be propelled to safe deflagration heights.
- Make sure all mortars, mortar racks, bundles, pre-loaded box items, cakes, candles, and ground displays have been thoroughly inspected and deemed inherently stable.
- Avoid placing any portion of your body over mortars during loading, wiring, or igniting, and immediately after the display has been fired.
- Use safe handling and loading procedures for all pyrotechnic devices.
- Pre-load larger shells as required.
- Check proper fit of shells in mortars.
- Designate spotter(s).

Display Checklist

- Verify fire service and EMS units are available and ready to respond.
- Establish good communications between crew, event sponsor, Authority Having Jurisdiction, and fire service/EMS units.
- Maintain crowd control, utilizing monitors and/or barriers.
- Use all required personal protective equipment especially protection for: head, eye, hearing, and foot.
- Wear long sleeved and long legged clothing made of cotton, wool or similar flame resistant cloth.
- Avoid placing any portion of your body over mortars when manually igniting them.
- Monitor weather and crowd conditions to maintain safety.
- Comply with directions given by the AHJ, spotter(s), or fire/EMS units.
- Use only flashlights or other nonincendive lighting in firing and ready box areas.

Post-Display Checklist

- Wear personal protective equipment appropriate for cleanup duties.
- Disable any electric firing switches and disconnect all electric cables.
- After at least 15 minutes, conduct search of the display and fallout areas.
- Follow proper marking and warning procedures for unexploded shells.
- Ensure that all unused live product and duds are accounted for, properly handled, repackaged and secured according to Federal, State and local regulations.
- Conduct a second site search at first light.

Firework displays can bring an entire community to your property. As a property owner it is your responsibility to provide a safe environment. Properly maintaining your property and hiring a professional pyrotechnic company can assist in providing a safe and secure environment. Other useful resources are the Pyrotechnics Guild International and National Fire Protection Association 1123.

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.