

***Why Cities Should Allow the Use of Fireworks  
An Open Letter to Iowa Municipalities***

*So as of June 1, 2017, Fireworks are legal to buy in Iowa. This leaves Municipalities a couple of choices. Namely, whether to allow the SALE of consumer-grade Fireworks (aka 1.4G) within their city limits – and – to allow or ban the USE of Fireworks in their Communities.*

*The Iowa State Legislature has created the new Law specifically to Allow the SALE of Fireworks to any legal Iowa Resident of Majority age – municipalities cannot change that. So now instead of Iowans (arguably illegally) crossing State Lines into any one of the adjoining States to spend Iowan earned dollars, said Iowans can now legally stay at home – spending their dollars here – thereby keeping Tax Revenues within the State.*

*Fireworks have been around for Thousands of years, and they will be in one form, or another for Thousands more. The problem is not whether Fireworks will be around, its how Safely they will be used and by whom. As 7 decades of factual data, collected by the US Government have proven – Fireworks themselves are no more dangerous than any other product. However, they DO have the potential to be abused/misused as any other product.*

*It is my opinion that the VAST majority (nearly 100%) of ALL Fireworks-related injuries/deaths occur because of either carelessness, lack of training, and/or a lack of respect given to them when used. Due to the composition of, and the WAY they are used/mis-used or abused, they CAN be dangerous.*

*I have always been a huge proponent of Fireworks Education. I currently serve as the Education Director of the Iowa Pyrotechnic Association (the largest State-wide Club in Iowa), a Co-Director of the Display Operator Certification Program for the Pyrotechnics Guild International (as the name implies – a Global Club), and am the somewhat defacto Safety Education Director of my local Club – the Stumptown Shooters of River Junction, Iowa. I believe – and the Facts bear out – that an experienced respectful/trained Shooter is a Safer Shooter – prone to far less “accidents”. I put the word accidents in quotes because when you (truly) analyze these incidents, there are very, very few true “accidents” involving Fireworks.*

*That is NOT to say that there could not be a true accident. A device could be truly defective and it COULD potentially malfunction, however, this is an EXTREMELY rare occurrence. Most accidents involve someone doing something (again arguably) stupid, reckless, and/or ill-informed, and dangerous with Fireworks in any combination or proportion thereof. Any so-called “reasoning” by any legislative body which involves the “security” of the Public by banning these products is rendered moot in my opinion. A much more reasoned approach involves training (even at the most basic levels) to ensure the “security” and Safety of the users.*

*I would very-much like to see the implementation of some sort of basic training involved in any consumer-grade permitting. In the very least, barring that, I recommend that ALL Iowa Municipalities embrace the new laws and allow both the SALE and the USE of Fireworks in their respective Jurisdictions. A complete/utter ban is NOT the way to go to make Fireworks “Safer”. Any attempt to do so is not only ill-advised, but futile as either a deterrent or as a “cure-all”. Such actions (or in-actions) are simply “hiding one’s head in the sand” in an effort to not see the problem and is doomed to failure.*

*ANYONE in the State can now BUY Fireworks – that is a given. The lack of familiarity with the USE of Fireworks can only lead to an increase in “accidents”. People will create “Sparkler Bombs”, place lit Shell Mortars on their heads, light Bottle rockets between their butt cheeks, stand over (looking into) “cakes” and mortars when these ignite, etc. These are real-life examples of things that the non-trained and/or non-thinking users of Fireworks HAVE been proven to do. One only needs look as far as YouTube or Facebook for proof.*

*This happens every day – yet for every idiot doing things like this, there are 1,000 more experienced folks doing it Safely – we hope that record continues. Barring some sort of mandatory training, people WILL get hurt by this unless they exercise some care, common sense, and caution. Its been my experience that no matter what – some will not however. In the very least though, there is an economic reasoning to be considered here. People ARE going to use the Fireworks they ARE going to buy (somewhere) in Iowa.*

*There will be no change there – ever. To think that you (as a Municipality) can say “Alright – the State of Iowa says you can buy these – but – don’t you USE them – OK?”. They will ALL respond with: “OK – (wink-wink) – we won’t” and before you can stop speaking – these folks will go to their backyards and shoot them off as they always have done and always will do. Training notwithstanding, Iowans will have greater access to and gain more experience with consumer-grade Fireworks from here on out. Some Cities (Waterloo for instance), have already said that you may buy, but not shoot them there. I recently went there, and hadn’t been in town 1 hour yet, and I was hearing some very familiar ‘popping’ sounds and seeing aerial shells above the skyline, so I don’t think their ‘laws’ are going to be very effective as a deterrent. We’ll see.*

*Your City’s PD and/or your paid, or VFD will spend valuable time and city resources chasing ghosts as they always have – thereby netting a negative for the city coffers. OR – you could allow the USE (and possibly the SALE) of Fireworks in your community. Thereby netting whatever monies you reasonably assess your Citizens for a permit to USE and/or what you collect as your portion of taxes due you for the SALE of Fireworks within your Jurisdiction.*

*On the one hand, you will continue to spend money chasing your tails. On the other hand, you will collect (if not all – then some) of the proceeds from these users and/or sale proceeds. By the time Police, or the FD arrives – its over. And; IF the person felt the need (because of your ban) to “hurry it up”, there may be an unnecessary “accident”. Thereby effectively ensuring your Citizens are less Safe.*

*Which choice(s) do you suppose are more likely to decrease “accidents” and do more good for your community overall?*