



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS – WALLA WALLA COUNTY
and
WALLA WALLA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS NO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

JOINT NEWS RELEASE – for immediate release

June 25, 2015

Walla Walla County Board of Commissioners
Walla Walla Public Health and Legislative Building
314 West Main/P. O. Box 1506
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Walla Walla County Fire Protection Districts
c/o Contact: Chief Mike Wickstrom
Fire District 5, 460 W. Humorist Road
Burbank, WA 99323

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FIRE DANGER AT HIGH LEVEL IN COUNTY; FIRE SAFETY AWARENESS URGED

Walla Walla County fire protection district chiefs, firefighters, emergency responders, representatives of the local agricultural industry, and the county commissioners are joining together in a special effort to ask citizens to employ extra caution during the upcoming weeks to prevent fires. A spark from fireworks or a campfire can ignite a fire instantaneously, which can result in the loss of a crop and livelihood, or possibly even a life.

Due to the combination of dry air and high temperatures resulting in extreme fire danger, Walla Walla County enacted a temporary burn ban, to run from Friday, June 26, 2015 through Sunday, July 5, 2015. This ban may be extended should the need arise. For the period named, Walla Walla County will be imposing the temporary burn ban on ALL burning, agricultural, residential, and recreational as well as special (roadsides, ditches, etc.). This ban would include other burning that would normally be allowed without a permit. The ban does not apply to fireworks legally purchased and utilized.

Walla Walla County Fire Protection District Number 5 Chief Mike Wickstrom says “Although last year we thought that the fire severity issues couldn't get any worse, this year, with the lack of snow pack in the Blues and the extended triple digit forecast for the County, we are definitely in extreme conditions for the upcoming 4th of July holiday”.

Chief Wickstrom went on to add “The weather couldn't have timed itself more perfectly to zap any moisture we had, especially before the 4th. We are just hoping that the wind doesn't pick up to add to the severity. Fire conditions all over the State are extreme and it is very likely that any fire that is started could develop into a major problem in a hurry.”

While fireworks are a way to celebrate this time of year, many times fires result. Please think twice about setting off fireworks anywhere near dry materials such as fields of cereal grains or roadsides. The 4th of July is not only traditionally fun, it also is the holiday with the most fires, with more than \$35 million in damages resulting annually nationwide.

Some other tips to make this time of year fun AND safe: Have a fire extinguisher handy at all times, along with a hose and water buckets and shovel for extra safety measures. Make sure that the area where you are setting off fireworks is free of bushes, dry grass, trees, streamers, balloons, flammable helium, and other fire hazardous materials. Never throw or point fireworks toward people, animals, vehicles, structures or flammable materials. Once the fireworks fun is over, make sure all items are completely free of heat and fire before leaving the area or disposing of the debris, so nothing is left to smolder and catch fire after the party is over. Stay away from illegal fireworks. They are illegal due to the increased danger involved with certain types of fireworks.

Also, every year there are many, many pets traumatized by fireworks, with some running away never to be found. Check with your veterinarian and think ahead about the effects of fireworks on your pet and others.

In the county, Walla Walla County Code (Chapter 15) and Washington state laws (RCW 70.77) allow fireworks to be discharged ONLY between the hours of 9 a.m. and 11 p.m. on July 1, 2, and 3, and then on July 4, starting at 9 a.m. and ending at midnight. Within the city limits of Walla Walla, fireworks may only be discharged on July 4th and only between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and midnight. More information for the city can be found at this link: <http://www.ci.walla-walla.wa.us/component/k2/item/267-fireworks>

Walla Walla County Commissioner Jim Duncan, former Emergency Management Director for the county, asks that “as the current heat wave and the extremely dry conditions increase the wildfire danger in our County, please be safe and enjoy the 4th of July holiday responsibly.”

Fireworks represent a hallmark of Independence Day celebrations, but consumer fireworks are extremely dangerous, causing thousands of injuries and fires each year. With many fireworks displays scheduled for this year by various municipalities and organizations and put on by professionals, you can help out this year by enjoying those events instead, leaving worries about fire or having to face clean-up to someone else!

If you have any questions or would like other tips to help maintain a safe and fire-free environment for all, please contact your local fire protection district or Chief Wickstrom. (A list with contact information for the county fire protection districts is included with this news release.)

Walla Walla County Commissioners

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James K. Johnson, Member, District 1
James L. Duncan, Member, District 3
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Fire District #2
Jim Callahan, Sr., Chief
Norma Bessy, Secretary
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Fire District #3
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Fire District #4
Rocky Eastman, Chief
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