

Attachment 2: Updates on 2021 Fireworks Enforcement and Education Actions

2021 COVID-19 Unpermitted Use Fireworks Action Plan

In response to an increase in unpermitted fireworks use during the 2020 warm weather season, staff in Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) and Toronto Fire Services (TFS), in collaboration with Strategic Communications, implemented an action plan to support compliant fireworks use and sale. The action plan included a suite of enhanced public education and outreach initiatives, complemented by data-driven priority enforcement.

Enhanced Public Education Campaign

As part of the Action Plan, a public education campaign was launched in 2021 to inform residents about the rules around fireworks use, fireworks safety tips, and the proper disposal of fireworks. The campaign, held in two phases from May to July, ran advertisements in the weeks leading up to the two designated dates, Victoria Day and Canada Day.

The campaign educated residents about the dates when fireworks are allowed, when permits are needed to set off fireworks, where in the city fireworks use is allowed (in private property only) and where it is prohibited (in parks, beaches and other public spaces). Information on how to safely use and properly dispose of fireworks to prevent accidents was also provided.

The campaign included online and social media advertisements for both phases, along with 70 digital transit shelter and three large format billboard ads for the second phase. Online and social media ads were also geo-targeted to areas with higher rates of fireworks non-compliance based on enforcement and incident data. Overall, the advertisements performed very well. Online ads on high-traffic sites garnered more than two (2) million impressions and social media ads received 849,219 impressions. Compared to industry standards, most ads had very good to excellent click-thru-rates (percentage of time people saw the ad and clicked on link for more information).

In addition to advertisements, the City's communications channels were utilized to educate residents. This included enhancements to the webpage (toronto.ca/fireworks) and information provided via news release, social media, City newsletters, and outreach to Councillors and fireworks vendors. Additional signage in City parks was also installed in areas where unpermitted use of fireworks has been an ongoing issue. This education strategy is being utilized again for the upcoming warm weather season with edits made based on lessons learned from the previous campaign.

Data-Driven Enforcement

Public education and outreach initiatives will be complemented by continued enforcement and compliance efforts by MLS. MLS maximized enforcement resources by targeting parks and neighbourhoods where the greatest number of complaints and incidents occurred last year. When possible, officers conducted proactive enforcement in these areas during dates when unpermitted fireworks use is common. MLS also offered opportunities for overtime to enable Bylaw Enforcement Officer to work longer hours over the long weekends in July, August, and September. Officers focused on

compliance and educate residents about Toronto's fireworks regulations and safety requirements.

Additional Actions in Response to City Council Directives

As a result of directions from City Council, a number of immediate actions were taken after both the June 7 to 8, 2021 and July 14 to 15, meetings.

Fireworks Ban in City Parks

At its meeting on June 7-8 2021, City Council voted to amend Chapter 466, Fireworks and Chapter 608, Parks to ban the possession of fireworks in City parks and beaches. Staff updated public education materials, City webpages, and the 311 database to communicate this change.

Increased Signage in City Parks

Staff installed 116 No Fireworks signs in various City parks identified by Council, and parks that have had a higher than normal complaints or issues related to fireworks. These signs were placed along park entrances, common walking paths within parks, and in some cases on both sides of poles or fences to flag for visitors walking in either direction.

Increased Set Fine Amounts

MLS staff applied to the Province of Ontario and received approval to increase fireworks related set fines, which came into effect July 12, 2021. All fireworks set fines under the Fireworks Bylaw and Parks Bylaw have been doubled. Fireworks set fines now range from \$400 to \$1,000 dollars. For example, the new set fine under the Parks Bylaw for possessing or igniting a fireworks in a City park is \$600.