

Attachment 2: Enhanced notification measures for filming with “high impact” pyrotechnic events

Toronto's film and television production industry is highly valuable to the city, producing an annual direct spend as high as \$2.6 billion and supporting a skilled workforce of 40,000 workers. The City has a legacy of strategic investments in Toronto's film industry over decades to achieve this success, including Council's recent adoption of “Toronto's Screen Future: A Strategic Plan for Continued Growth 2025-2030.”

The volume and complexity of film production in Toronto continues to grow, and this includes the use of more elaborate special effects and pyrotechnics as part of film shoots. Recognizing this changing environment, the City of Toronto must ensure residents, businesses, and community stakeholders receive timely and effective communication regarding filming activities that may be disruptive or cause concern.

In response to a Member Motion ([MM40.38](#)), City staff examined opportunities to enhance notification measures for filming where “high impact” pyrotechnic events, particularly those involving visible effects and loud noise, are proposed, especially in proximity to sensitive communities. The Film Office will implement an enhanced protocol, as described in this Attachment, effective immediately. The enhanced protocol includes a larger lead time for notification, consultation with local Councillors and expanding communication tools relative to the identified impact.

Current filming notification processes

When a film production seeks to include special effect pyrotechnics, they must submit a request for approval to Toronto Fire Services (TFS) and Toronto Police Service (TPS) for review including that by TPS' Explosive Disposal Unit. If special effect pyrotechnics are approved, the Film Office then requires that the film permit applicants deliver letters of notification no later than 48 hours before work begins to impacted residents, businesses, local BIAs and resident associations. Letters of notification outline any expected special effects or pyrotechnics, with such letters reviewed by City staff prior to being issued to residents and other parties.

However, currently notification of pyrotechnics does not follow processes in place for other exemptions to film guidelines, which are required for situations such as extended hours of work or increased activity in residential areas. In such cases, the Film Office requires the film permit applicant to deliver “Have Your Say” letters to affected residents, businesses, local BIAs and resident associations no later than five days before the exemption implementation date. Reviewed and approved by City staff prior to being issued, “Have Your Say” letters outline any expected special effects or pyrotechnics and provide contact information should readers have questions or concerns about activations. As outlined below, such best practices in communication with impacted residents, will be extended to pyrotechnics, and further enhanced in the case of high impact pyrotechnics.

Proposed changes to filming notification

The following changes will be implemented immediately by the Film Office to apply an enhanced notification process for “high impact” pyrotechnic events on film sets.

Definition of “high impact”:

Working with TFS and TPS, staff will develop a definition for pyrotechnic events that may be deemed “high impact” where effects are expected to be clearly visible or audible to the surrounding community and may cause concern with a significant number of residents and business proprietors, and/or may adversely impact City services, including transportation or emergency operations.

Considerations for evaluating impact:

In application, this new definition will be used to assess the potential impacts on surrounding residents and businesses of any pyrotechnic effect on a film set. In reviewing pyrotechnic applications, the Film Office will consult with Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Police Service, Explosive Disposal Unit, on a case by case basis to apply the definition in a consistent and transparent manner. Considerations for evaluating impact include but are not limited to visibility, noise, proximity of effect to stakeholders, and community sensitivities, as described below.

High impact visibility considerations would include:

- Pyrotechnics that are visible from surrounding residential or commercial areas.
- Flame effects, smoke effects, aerial effects, or flashes that are expected to be seen by a large number of persons not participating in the film shoot.

High impact noise considerations would include:

- Effects that create loud or repetitive explosive sounds.
- Noise levels that may generate public concern, complaints, or confusion.

Proposed pyrotechnic events would be considered high impact if in proximity to:

- Residential dwellings
- Businesses
- Schools
- Hospitals

High Impact community sensitivity considerations would include:

- Activity is expected to generate public feedback due to the effect’s realism and intensity relative to actual events in community or lived experiences of residents.

Enhanced Notification Protocol

Once a “high impact” pyrotechnic application has been identified, reviewed, and approved with Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Police Service, Explosive Disposal Unit, the Film Office will initiate the following enhanced notification protocols with the film production company:

- Where pyrotechnic activities are determined to be high impact including effects that are highly visible, generate significant noise, affect surrounding residents or businesses, and/or require enhanced public safety coordination, the Toronto Film Office will require a minimum of seven (7) days lead time to review, approve and execute its enhanced notification protocols.
- The Film Office will notify the local ward Councillors’ offices, City of Toronto Communications, Transportation Services, Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Police Service, and any other City Divisions as applicable.
- Visible signage will be placed on nearby sidewalks by the film production company notifying passersby of the planned “high impact” pyrotechnic event.
- The Film Office will work with City of Toronto Communications to deliver effective communication scaled to the expected impact to ensure residents reliably receive notification. Enhanced communication will include such aspects as:
 - social media posts;
 - geo-targeted advertising, where possible; and/or
 - other targeted public outreach tools, as deemed appropriate.

The Film Office will continue to explore leveraging ward Councillors’ constituency newsletter distribution lists and community network contacts, including BIAs and resident associations, to further broadcast notifications about high impact pyrotechnic events in their wards.

Summary

Taken together, these new efforts to define high impact pyrotechnic effects and, where such effects are approved, implement enhanced communications requirements for film producers to ensure that residents and businesses who stand to be impacted are notified, will significantly strengthen the City’s approach to supporting film production in Toronto while mitigating impacts on the communities in which films are made.