

Panhandle

Public Health District

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June 25, 2026

For immediate release

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Fireworks Safety Critical During Dry Conditions Across the Nebraska Panhandle

As families across the Nebraska Panhandle prepare to celebrate Independence Day, local health and emergency officials are reminding residents to use extreme caution with fireworks due to ongoing drought conditions and elevated wildfire risk across western Nebraska.

Much of the Nebraska Panhandle continues to experience dry conditions, creating an increased risk for grassfires and rapidly spreading wildfires. According to drought monitoring data, portions of western Nebraska remain under moderate to severe drought conditions, with below-normal precipitation contributing to dry vegetation and heightened fire danger.

“With the level of dryness we’re seeing, it doesn’t take much to start a fire,” said a Nathan Flowers, Gering City Fire Chief. “We respond to these calls every year, and in these conditions, fires can spread rapidly before crews can contain them. Limiting or avoiding fireworks altogether is one of the best ways to reduce that risk.”

Residents are encouraged to check local city, county, and village regulations before purchasing or using fireworks. Nebraska law allows consumer fireworks sales from June 24 through July 5, but local jurisdictions may enact stricter rules or temporary bans depending on fire danger conditions.

Officials encourage the public to follow these important fireworks safety tips:

- Always follow local fireworks restrictions and burn bans.
- Never use fireworks on dry grass, fields, or near crops and pastureland.
- Keep a bucket of water, garden hose, or fire extinguisher nearby.
- Never allow young children to handle fireworks.
- Light one firework at a time and move away quickly.
- Never relight malfunctioning fireworks.
- Soak used fireworks in water before disposal.
- Avoid using fireworks during windy conditions and stay upwind of fireworks to protect your lungs.



- Consider attending a professional public fireworks display instead of using fireworks at home.
- Those with sensitive lung conditions should stay inside, in a room set up to support clean air.

Fireworks are always at risk of causing the worsening of lung diseases or chronic coughing, serious injuries, burns, structure fires, and wildfires. Dry and windy conditions common in the Panhandle can allow fires to spread rapidly across grasslands and agricultural areas.

The pollution from wildfires has already impacted our communities several times this year. The additional air pollution concerns from fireworks in addition to the risk of wildfire from the fireworks makes this year's fireworks particularly risky for our health and safety. There is an app called Love My Air Network that provides real-time air quality updates. Residents can monitor air quality by downloading the Love My Air Network application from Google Play or the App Store on any smart phone.

Community members are encouraged to stay informed through local emergency management agencies, volunteer fire departments, and county officials regarding any updated fire restrictions or fireworks limitations leading up to the July 4 holiday.

For more information on fireworks safety and Nebraska regulations, visit your local city or county website, the Nebraska State Fire Marshal or Safe Nebraska websites.

To learn more about many topics related to wellbeing and stress, please visit <https://pphd.crediblemind.com/>

For more information about local health programs and resources, contact Nicole Berosek, Wellness and Prevention Program Manager, at nberosek@pphd.ne.gov, or 308-279-3496.

Did you see the latest PWWC newsletter? If not, check it out here: <https://pphd.ne.gov/pwwc.html>

For additional information about worksite wellness, visit the website or call Berosek at 308-279-3496. The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is proudly part of Panhandle Public Health District and specializes in supporting employers in the Panhandle region. We recognize that many employers support a diverse and remote workforce and offer innovative ways to overcome the challenge of working with a virtual team. We understand that many of our employers do not have full-time wellness resources and work to provide resources and training to make running a worksite wellness program as easy as possible.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.