

Surface Water Management Division Fireworks Impact on Water Quality

A message to citizens about the impacts of fireworks on surface waters.

Fireworks contain pollutants including heavy metals and perchlorate, a chemical used to propel fireworks. When fireworks are detonated over a water body or waste materials are not properly disposed of, pollutants can enter the storm drainage systems, rivers, lakes and potentially groundwater.

Snohomish County conducted a study on the impacts of fireworks on Lake Shoecraft and a stormwater detention pond in 2009.

Snohomish County Water Pollution Control Code (SCC 7.53) prohibits the discharge of pollutants into the storm drainage system, and natural water bodies including groundwater. Individuals and organizations responsible for fireworks displays should minimize the discharge of pollutants to our waters by following the recommendations below:

- Request low (or no) perchlorate containing fireworks. This may require that you make inquiries with your suppliers and/or manufacturers;
- Refrain from discharging fireworks from or into public sidewalks and roadways which may contain storm drainage systems;
- Institute rigorous "housekeeping" practices. Unburned aerial shell fragments and other debris contain high levels of pollutants. Individuals, fireworks companies or display sponsors should remove all visible shell debris, and dispose of in accordance with applicable codes and manufacturers instructions. Please exercise caution while collecting and removing debris during low-light periods;
- Contain and/or promptly address runoff in cases where water is used to douse duds or misfired materials.

If you have questions about the information here or would like to report a concern about impacts to water quality, please call the Surface Water Management Water Quality Complaint Hotline at 425-388-6481.