



State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER J. COX
Lieutenant Governor

Department of
Environmental Quality

L. Scott Baird
Executive Director

Kim Shelley
Deputy Director

NEWS RELEASE
Wednesday, July 1, 2020

CONTACT
Jared Mendenhall
Public Information Officer
Cell: 801-707-0817
jmendenhall@utah.gov

Fireworks and Wildfires Impact Utah's Air Quality

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is reminding residents of the air pollution caused by front-porch fireworks. Fireworks bursting in the air is typical in Utah on Independence Day. It goes without saying, however, that this year is far from typical. With many large public firework shows on hold due to the human health risks posed by COVID-19, regulators are anxious about an increase in front-porch fireworks.

“Every year we see significant spikes in particulate matter concentrations on the Fourth of July and Pioneer Day,” said Bryce Bird, air quality director. “These spikes are mostly related to the smaller, neighborhood fireworks and barbecues. Exceptional events like wildfires and fireworks on holidays can make our air quality much worse — a fact that we hope people will take into consideration when planning their holiday parties.”

DEQ’s Division of Air Quality (DAQ) monitors high concentrations of particulate matter (PM) pollution associated with fireworks — and wildfires — every Fourth of July. This is an unwelcome addition to summertime air pollution from ozone.

Fireworks usually cause a short-term spike in PM pollution that mixes out of the airshed by morning. During these peaks, young children, the elderly and sensitive individuals with compromised respiratory or cardiovascular systems can experience side effects from the poor air quality.

The scientists at DAQ recommend that individuals who fall into these categories avoid areas near firework shows. Instead, they should choose a safe viewing spot away from the explosions. Those particularly sensitive to poor air quality should stay indoors (especially during the evening) and close their windows. This will help ensure that indoor air is not affected.

Also, front-porch fireworks can go awry and spark wildfires. In addition to threatening life and property, the smoke from these fires often darken Utah skies with smoke pollution. Since coronavirus-related health concerns have led to the cancelation of most public firework displays, residents should check current regulations, restrictions and safety precautions before holding their own firework celebrations.

To help residents plan ahead, DAQ provides hourly air quality monitoring through its UtahAir app and website, air.utah.gov.

About DEQ

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) mission is to safeguard and improve Utah's air, land and water through balanced regulation. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah's air, land and water. For more information, visit www.deq.utah.gov, follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](#)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](#)).