

## **Safety First on the Fourth!**

Horseshoe Bay will be busy this coming fourth of July, with numerous community activities, out-of-town visitors, and increased traffic. Residents will welcome family members, and gorgeous nighttime fireworks displays are sure to lure many residents out of their homes. While we know many folks will be enjoying the festivities, including local parades and neighborhood barbecues, it's important for all citizens and guests to exercise caution during the holiday weekend.

### **Setting Off Fireworks Within the City Limits is Illegal**

It is illegal to set off fireworks within the city limits of Horseshoe Bay, unless it is an approved and permitted public display, such as the fireworks show scheduled at the Resort. Possession of fireworks could result in a fine of up to \$2,000.

Additionally, fireworks are a safety hazard, especially for small children, as well as a fire risk. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public firework show put on by professionals. Please consider safer options if celebrating at home by using glow sticks, noise makers, or silly string.

"While it is a great American tradition to enjoy fireworks around the 4th of July, it is important to remember that all fireworks, even sparklers, pose dangers to consumers," says U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Chair Alex Hoehn-Saric.

In 2023, at least eight people died, and an estimated 9,700 were injured in incidents involving fireworks. The CPSC report found teenagers aged 15 to 19 had the highest estimated rate of emergency room-treated, fireworks-related injuries, with children aged 5 to 9 years old having the second highest rate.

Fireworks are a common cause of fires, starting an average of 18,500 to 19,500 fires annually in the United States. While this number fluctuates slightly year to year, it consistently highlights the significant fire risk associated with fireworks, especially amid drought conditions.

### **Protect Yourself from the Heat**

The Texas Hill Country typically experiences hot and dry weather on the 4th of July, with average high temperatures in the mid-90s to low 100s. While the Hill Country tends to be a bit cooler than other parts of Texas, the humidity can make the heat feel more intense.

Limit your outdoor activities. If you must work outdoors, take frequent breaks and avoid the hottest part of the day. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and avoiding sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic drinks. Take breaks from the heat by spending time indoors in an air-conditioned space. Check on loved ones and neighbors who may be at risk and don't have air conditioning.

Wear sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher and remember to reapply throughout the day to protect yourself from sunburn. Consider wearing a wide-brimmed hat and lightweight, protective clothing, and sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Never leave children or pets in a vehicle alone. Check that animals also have access to fresh water and shade.

Watch for symptoms of heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Heat exhaustion symptoms include heavy sweating, cool, clammy skin, muscle cramps, headache, dizziness, fatigue, and nausea or vomiting. A fast, weak pulse and low blood pressure upon standing can also occur.

Heatstroke is a serious medical emergency characterized by a high body temperature (often above 104°F or 40°C) and altered mental status, potentially including confusion, seizures, or loss of consciousness. Other symptoms include rapid pulse, rapid breathing, headache, dizziness, nausea, and vomiting. A key distinction from heat exhaustion is that heatstroke can cause a change in sweating, with skin appearing hot and dry (classic heatstroke) or still sweating (exertional heatstroke). Call 911 if you are experiencing symptoms of heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

### **Lake LBJ Will Be Busy**

With more visitors to the area, lake traffic will be heavy, increasing the risk of boating accidents.

Always have a designated sober operator. The probability of a fatal boating accident is doubled when alcohol is involved. Authorities will be patrolling the lakes, and Boating While Intoxicated (BWI) carries penalties like driving while intoxicated, including possible driver's license suspension.

While there are no posted speed limits on the water, citations may be issued for excessive speed or reckless operation. Reckless operation of watercraft can also lead to an arrest. With increased traffic on the lake, maintaining a safe speed becomes even more critical.

Always use a personal flotation device when operating or riding in a boat! Adults should ensure children wear a life jacket.

For those cooling off by taking a dip in the water, remember to never swim alone. Always have a swim buddy! Designate a water watcher—an adult responsible for supervising children in the water without distractions. Teach children to always ask for permission before entering the water so adults can ensure they are supervised.

### **Outdoor Cooking**

Before firing up your grill to make those delicious hamburgers and hot dogs, take the following steps to ensure your outdoor cooking goes smoothly.

For some, the Fourth of July barbecue may be their first outdoor celebration of the summer season. Inspect outdoor outlets for wear and tear from winter weather, as well as lawn debris, cobwebs, and other detritus that may get into an outlet box when exposed to the elements. Repair or replace any damaged outlets to prevent electrical hazards.

Grill safely! Keep grills at least 10 feet away in every direction (above, below, and to the side) from any power lines, electrical equipment, and combustible surfaces of buildings. Always supervise the grill and ensure that it is turned off when not in use. Remember to only use grills – whether electric, gas, or charcoal – in open, well-ventilated areas outside. Use proper starters for charcoal grills, and let coals cool completely before discarding. Check for leaks on propane tanks before use.

Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances and devices. When setting up festive lighting and decorations, avoid overloading power outlets. Use appropriate extension cords and power

strips equipped with circuit protection. Overloaded outlets can cause the circuit to trip, or worse, cause an electrical fire.

### **Protecting Pets**

More pets go missing on the Fourth of July weekend than any other time of the year. Animal control officials report a 30 to 60 percent increase in lost pets between July 4th and 6th.

Keep pets inside! A startled pet may run away when fireworks are going off. Restricting them to the house for a few hours is best for their safety. Keep them away from windows. Loud noises raise anxiety in pets. Find a quiet, cool spot for them. Stressed pets often overheat.

Don't bring pets to fireworks displays. Pets may be overstimulated by crowds, and fireworks can cause damage to their sensitive ears and cause fear.

Find a distraction. Play soothing music or turn on the television for white noise to mask the sound of firecrackers. Providing a favorite toy or treats can also help reduce anxiety. Consult your veterinarian about medications and their side effects, as well as other strategies to assist your pet.

Ensure your pet has ID (collar and tag) or that their microchip has your current contact information. It's the best way to get your pet safely returned should they get startled and make a run for it.

Keep alcohol away from pets. Cats and dogs can become dangerously intoxicated, leading to severe health emergencies such as respiratory failure, coma, and even death. Beer containing fermented hops and ethanol is especially toxic to them.

Avoid the urge to feed your pets fatty barbeque scraps or foods intended for your guests. Some food can cause upset stomachs and may even be toxic to your pet.

Following these simple precautions on Independence Day won't damper your fun but can make a huge difference in ensuring you and your loved ones have a safe and enjoyable holiday! Be sure to follow the City of Horseshoe Bay on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/horseshoebaygov](http://www.facebook.com/horseshoebaygov)) and Instagram ([www.instagram.com/horseshoebaygov](http://www.instagram.com/horseshoebaygov)).