



King County

Dow Constantine

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CLERK
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

July 2, 2015

King County Council
Room 1200
COURTHOUSE

Dear Councilmembers:

Over the past few days, we have heard from residents across the County who are concerned about the increased risk of fires this Independence Day caused by fireworks, given the record-setting heat and unusually dry conditions. There is a particular concern in unincorporated areas that are located adjacent to or between cities that have existing bans on fireworks. Most cities in King County have adopted some sort of ban or restriction on the use and sale of fireworks.

I share these concerns about the elevated fire risk and asked the Prosecuting Attorney's Office what King County can do to adopt similar bans or restrictions, either on an emergency or permanent basis. I believe it is important that local leaders have the flexibility to quickly respond to emergency conditions, particularly when we have the opportunity to prevent harm. However, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office advises that state law is clear: The code provisions authorizing emergency bans to be declared from time to time when hazardous conditions exist have to be adopted a year in advance. The same is also true for permanent bans. Douglas and San Juan counties have such a code in place.

While the timeline imposed by state statute does not allow us the ability to address our concerns this year, I invite Councilmembers to join in a process with me to develop the most sensible policy for Council consideration before next summer.

In the meantime, I have instructed our Fire Marshal to encourage the public to attend licensed firework displays rather than discharging their own fireworks. We have also been working with fire districts across the County and with the media to emphasize the need for precautions when handling fireworks.

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I stand ready to work with you on these measures. By working together, we will be better prepared to protect our people and property from this increased risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dow Constantine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dow Constantine
King County Executive