

Gavel to Gavel: Laws behind Fourth of July



Tom Wolfe is a trial attorney and commercial litigator whose practice is focused on complex business cases including product liability, oil and gas, mass tort and class action defense. Tom is also the president and managing partner at Phillips Murrah.

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Gavel to Gavel: Policing fireworks

The prefrontal cortex is often referred to as the CEO of the brain. It's responsible for, among other things, weighing the possible consequences of behavior. Research indicates that this area of the brain is not fully developed until age 25. For teenagers, the answer to the most frequently asked question – “What were you thinking?” – might legitimately be: “Huh?”

Perhaps this explains why, at age 13, my best friend, Thomas, and I decided to light the fuse of an M-80 that was duct-taped to the wall of my parent's garage, just to see what would happen. The explosion was amazing, as was the duration of my grounding. Thomas would say that it was well worth the price that I paid.

But I digress. The Fourth of July is just a few weeks away, and there are laws that come with the holiday. It is illegal to sell, possess or discharge fireworks within the majority of cities around the state, including Oklahoma City. On the enlightened side, you'll find that the cities of Choctaw, Okarche and Mustang will allow fireworks on certain dates and times.

The good news is that as of 2010, fireworks approved by the federal government can now be sold in Oklahoma year-round by licensed distributors and manufacturers. Previously, they could be sold only during the periods from June 15 to July 6 and Dec. 15 to Jan. 2. Only people age 12 or older or those accompanied by an adult may purchase fireworks. Fireworks may not be sold door to door or by mail order, and those wishing to put on a fireworks display must file a permit with the Oklahoma state fire marshal at least 10 days in advance and meet minimum insurance requirements.

Perhaps the reasoning is obvious, but fireworks may not be set off within 500 feet of any church, hospital, asylum, public

school, unharvested agricultural crop or fireworks store. They also may not be set off from vehicles or near a group of people.

Finally, bottle rockets, cherry bombs and M-80s are just flat prohibited. Unfair!

Though John Mellencamp was probably not thinking about the Fourth of July, his lyrics still fit this article:

Outside the club Cherry Bomb, Our hearts were really thumpin',
Say yeah yeah yeah.

Exactly!