



DO's and DON'TS of Firework Safety

- DO** Remember not to light fireworks near people, trees, homes, or any combustible materials.
- DON'T** Shoot fireworks off on uneven ground. To ensure stability, always light them on a hard, flat and level surface.
- DO** Make sure spectators keep their distance. They should be 25 to 40 feet away from ground-based items and even further for aerial products.
- DO** Keep a fire extinguisher or water hose nearby in the event of a fire. The National Fire Prevention Association notes that the Fourth of July features more reported fires than any other day of the year.
- DON'T** Shoot fireworks off in windy conditions. Otherwise, make sure the prevailing wind is blowing away from the audience.
- DO** Check any safety guidelines and warnings on the wrapper of the fireworks before lighting them.
- DON'T** Forget that sparklers and firecrackers are no safer than other types of fireworks. The tip of a sparkler burns at a temperature of more than 1200 F, which is hot enough to cause third-degree burns and is hotter than the temperature it takes to melt glass.
- DO** Buy fireworks from just anyone. You want to ensure you are purchasing them from a reputable retailer of legal fireworks.
- DON'T** Overindulge in alcoholic beverages when lighting fireworks. Your perception and dexterity can be compromised by alcohol.
- DO** Make sure that no part of your body is over the firework when lighting it. Use a punk or long butane lighter to keep as far away as possible.
- DON'T** Let small children handle or light fireworks.
- DO** Wait 15 to 20 minutes after lighting a firework to see if it has ignited. If not, jump the firework in a bucket of water and move on to a fresh firework.

The History of America's Independence Day

"Taxation without representation!" was the battle cry in America's 13 colonies, which were forced to pay taxes to England's King George III despite having no representation in the British Parliament. As dissatisfaction grew, British troops were sent in to quell the early movement toward rebellion. Repeated attempts by the colonists to resolve the crisis without military conflict proved fruitless.

On June 11, 1776, the colonies' Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia and formed a committee whose express purpose was drafting a document that would formally sever their ties with Great Britain. The committee included Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston. Jefferson, who was considered the strongest and most eloquent writer, crafted the original draft document (as seen above). A total of 86 changes were made to his draft and the Continental Congress officially adopted the final version on July 4, 1776.

The following day, copies of the Declaration of Independence were distributed, and on July 6, The Pennsylvania Evening Post became the first newspaper to print the extraordinary document. The Declaration of Independence has since become our nation's most cherished symbol of liberty.

Bonfires and Illuminations
On July 8, 1776, the first public readings of the Declaration were held in Philadelphia's Independence Square to the ringing of bells and band music. One year later, on July 4, 1777, Philadelphia marked Independence Day by adjourning Congress and celebrating with bonfires, bells and fireworks.

The custom eventually spread to other towns, both large and small, where the day was marked with processions, oratory, picnics, contests, games, military displays and fireworks. Observations throughout the nation became even more common at the end of the War of 1812 with Great Britain.

In June of 1826, Thomas Jefferson sent a letter to Roger C. Weightman, declining an invitation to come to Washington, D.C. to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It was the last letter that Jefferson, who was gravely ill, ever wrote. In it, Jefferson says of the document:

"May it be to the world, what I believe it will be ... the signal of arousing men to burst the chains ... and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form, which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. ... For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them."

- Thomas Jefferson

June 24, 1826 Monticello

Congress established Independence Day as a holiday in 1870, and in 1938 Congress reaffirmed it as a paid holiday for federal employees. Today, communities across the nation mark this major midsummer holiday with parades, firework displays, picnics and performances of The Star-Spangled Banner and marches by John Philip Sousa

Home Country

BY SLIM RANDES

We all watched as the flag came by. It was the first thing in the parade, of course. Great big one, carried by two of the kids from the ROTC at the high school. The bands followed, along with the mounted patrol, the ski patrol in their summer-weight jackets, the float with the princesses on it, and the local kids leading dogs and cats – some rather

reluctantly – on leashes.

For some of us, the Fourth of July parade is a chance to see just how much the local kids have grown over the past year. For others, it's a chance to see something that is really ours. This is our valley. This is our town. This is our parade. These are our people. These are the people who make our little valley unique in the whole world. This is a chance for us all to get

together and celebrate us, you know?

But all that comes later. What comes first on this day above all others is the American flag. Oh, it's a great big one. Where they found this one, I don't know, but it takes two high school boys to carry it. It really doesn't matter what size it is, because it's what it means to us that counts.

To Herb over there, there are memories of his terrible

days in Korea, I'm sure, and the wounds that sent him home early. To Doc, maybe it's the way the G.I. Bill let him go back to college and fulfill his life's dream of taking care of sick people.

To Annette, over across the street there, there is a look in her eyes that tells us that flag meant she could protest whatever the complaint-du-jour was during her college days. She knows there are few places

in the world this tolerant of unpopular opinions.

And then there's Dewey down on the corner. He's got his hand over his heart as the flag goes by. Maybe he's thinking of a country that will allow him to start a business with a borrowed pickup and a shovel and supply our flower beds with fertilizer. He sure wasn't able to make anything else work for him. And today this accident-prone pal of

ours has branched out into fishing worms and compost.

But these are just speculations, because what the flag means to each of us is personal. We don't have to tell anyone. We never have to explain. We even have the freedom not to be here looking as the flag goes by.

It's an American thing. A very private American moment.

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