

Dry days spark fireworks worries across region

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Staff Writer

If you plan to have a blast with fireworks this weekend, fire officials recommend you don't do it at home.

While firefighters in Richmond Hill are not going to show up to your home and snuff personal fireworks displays, deputy fire chief Brian Ellsworth is urging residents to be "extremely, extremely, extremely careful" in light of the lack of rain and dry conditions.

There is a fire ban in Richmond Hill.

Improper use of fireworks can become a fire hazard if they start flying around combustibles such as trees and leaves, Markham Fire public education and fire prevention officer Dave Blizzard said.

"If they get into people's eaves-troughs, they can cause problems," Mr. Blizzard said.

While there is no fire ban in Markham, all open air burning in

FIREWORKS SAFETY

- ▶ Handling and discharging of fireworks must only be done by adults;
- ▶ Carefully read and follow the directions;
- ▶ Always keep a hose or pail of water close by;
- ▶ Discharge fireworks well away from combustible materials such as buildings, trees or grass.

town is permitted by permit only, Mr. Blizzard said.

If you live south of Major Mackenzie Drive, you likely won't qualify for a permit, he added.

Don't even think about lighting a fire or sparking up that outdoor fire-

FIREWORKS DISPLAYS

▶ Whitchurch-Stouffville: July 1 as part of Strawberry Festival, Ball Diamond 2, 9:45 p.m.;

▶ Richmond Hill: July 1 at Richmond Green Park, 1300 Elgin Mills Rd. E. at 10 p.m.;

▶ Markham: July 1 at Milne Park, east side of McCowan Road south of Hwy. 7 at 9:30 p.m.

▶ Vaughan: July 1 at Canada's Wonderland, 10 p.m.

place in Whitchurch-Stouffville this weekend. A complete burning ban was issued this week due to warm weather and dry foliage.

"In a nutshell, the ban means residents will not be allowed to have any form of open air burn, such as recre-

ational fires and fires in chimney-type structures," said Rob McKenzie, deputy chief with Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire and Emergency Services.

Residents can apply for burning permits, but they will not be activated until the ban has been lifted.

A total fire ban was recently lifted in Vaughan, chief fire prevention officer John Careuso said.

While the city was not back to that critical point at press time, Mr. Careuso said the dry conditions were making it close.

Open air burning is prohibited in Vaughan without a permit.

Mr. Careuso urged anyone who intends to light fireworks on their property to follow safety rules and ensure they have a way to extinguish them. He also encouraged people to attend professional fireworks displays around the GTA.

"That's probably the best thing they can do."

— with files from Jim Mason

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