

Fireworks at the Lake

Fireworks displays have become a common occurrence on Otty Lake, but not everyone is a fan. If you are thinking of celebrating this way, please give some thought to your neighbours, pets, wildlife and the environment, and show some respect with timing and frequency.

Noise. The noise of popping fireworks can be disturbing to pets and wildlife. Pets may be distressed and run off. Birds and mammals may bolt or take off suddenly and become disoriented and be injured on windows or roadways. The noise can also be triggering for people with wartime experience, PTSD, or autism. See <https://ontarionature.org/lakes-and-fireworks-blog/> for more. The noise levels from large fireworks displays, with noise levels over 150 decibels, can cause hearing damage if experience for a long time, say over 15 minutes. Usually not a factor on Otty Lake! See more in this CBC story: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-fireworks-environment-wildlife-human-health-concerns-1.5218006>.

Pollution and Health. Studies have focused on perchlorate, which with the fuel source creates the heat and gas for the explosion. The perchlorates fall to the ground or water. Evidence suggests that they interfere with thyroid hormone production in fish and humans. But in the water perchlorate levels seem to spike but then return to normal levels. <https://cottagelife.com/outdoors/cottage-qa-do-fireworks-cause-pollution/>. But the metallic compounds used to make the pretty colours can be toxic or carcinogenic, and the particulate matter is a problem for those with asthma or other respiratory conditions. It even contributes to GHG emissions. This Forbes article goes into more detail: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2019/12/31/festive-fireworks-create-harmful-pall-of-pollution/?sh=352aad442853>.

Fire . Some jurisdictions have considered banning fireworks during periods of drought to reduce the possibility of a fire. Please be very careful when setting off fireworks, particularly when a fire ban is in effect or it is windy.

Alternatives. There are some lower impact fireworks out there you could look for. Biodegradable paper and compressed air as a propellant are two possibilities.

Finally, there are other ways to celebrate: campfires, music, laser light shows, stargazing, neighbourhood potluck or party – be creative!

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