

Late-night fireworks are more than just a headache

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO
Interim Tribune Editor

As the Fourth of July approaches, many residents throughout Niagara County say they are fed up with the barrage of fireworks going off at all hours of the night. Community Facebook forums are filled with countless posts by angry residents who want law enforcement to do more to take care of the problem.

While the problem arises every year, this year seems to be much worse. Capt. Karen Smith of the North Tonawanda Police Department says the city has seen an uptick in nuisance complaints about fireworks. In Niagara Falls, police Lt. Mike Corcoran says while the department's call volume about fireworks is about the same as last year, he has personally noticed a dramatic uptick in the complaints on social media.

Both agree that increase is probably due to the lack of official fireworks displays in the area. Many cities and towns in Niagara County canceled their fireworks displays in response to COVID-19.

But it's not just local residents who are annoyed. The problem appears to be rampant not only throughout New York state, but across the country, as well.

According to CNN, complaints about illegal fireworks in Boston were up 2,300% in May compared to last year, while complaints in

Pasadena, California, were up 400%.

Phantom Fireworks Vice President Bill Weimer also said "the demand and the business we've seen so far has been the strongest early fireworks season I've seen in my years of involvement in the fireworks business."

The fireworks that residents report hearing at night are illegal in New York state and are largely trafficked in from nearby states with looser firework restrictions – like Pennsylvania. New York state law allows for the sale and use of a specific category of consumer fireworks known as sparkling devices. According to the law, "sparkling devices are ground based or handheld devices that produce a shower of colored sparks and or a colored flame, audible crackling or whistling noise and smoke. These devices do not rise into the air, do not fire inserts or projectiles into the air, and do not explode or produce a report (explosive sound)."

During a press conference earlier this week in New York City, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the problem also persists in Albany where he lives. He took measures to address the issue of illegal fireworks by announcing a statewide fireworks enforcement detail.

"I want to remind New Yorkers that fireworks are dangerous and fireworks are illegal.

Some nights in New York City, it sounds like the Wild West with all the fireworks going off. I've never heard it like this before. They're disturbing. They bother people. And they are dangerous. And children, people, get hurt every year," Cuomo said.

Cuomo said the fireworks enforcement detail – comprised of state officials and state police – would be working with municipalities across the state to put a stop to the trafficking of illegal fireworks.

"We're going to try to prevent the fireworks from coming into the state in the first place before they get distributed," the governor said, adding, "The primary supplier for New York state is the state of Pennsylvania. Not the state itself, but fireworks companies within the state of Pennsylvania. And we're going to be focusing on that route for the transmission of the fireworks. We'll also be helping local governments deal with this issue, but I need the local governments in this state to take it seriously. I know there's a lot going on a lot of levels, but this is illegal and it's dangerous, so we have to stop it."

While many firework fanatics suggest critics are just being wet blankets, the truth is that the fireworks aren't just annoying. Pets, specifically dogs, have more sensitive ears and the explosion from fireworks can be incredibly trau-

matic. The sounds and lights can also have a triggering effect for soldiers afflicted with PTSD.

Fireworks also pose a major fire hazard. According to the National Fire Protection Association, fireworks are responsible for over 18,500 fires each year. Thankfully, fire departments in the Town of Niagara and North Tonawanda reported they have not had any fireworks-related accidents this year. However, in the City of Niagara Falls, a post on The Action Facebook page showed pictures of a garage fire in the city from early June with the cause purportedly being from fireworks.

The Tribune reached out to the Niagara Falls Fire Department for comment and feedback, but has not received a response.

Police throughout the area say they understand the community's frustrations and work their best to stop it. Corcoran and Smith both urge residents to contact law enforcement as soon as they see or hear illegal fireworks. Corcoran said to be specific as possible when filing a complaint.

"If the person's wearing a red shirt, or if it's coming from a specific house, or if there's a specific house in the area where they keep going off... something to look for when we're responding to a call or out on patrol," Corcoran said.

For pet owners whose furry

friends are upset by fireworks, the ASPCA website has some useful tips:

- ✓ Turning on some soft music and moving your pet into a room with no windows;

- ✓ An anxiety vest or a snugly fitting T-shirt can often help a pet remain calm; and

- ✓ If the problem is egregious, speak to your veterinarian about anti-anxiety medication.

The ASPCA also urges pet owners to be careful about fireworks casings found outside as they contain dangerous chemicals and heavy metals that could be harmful if swallowed by a pet.

To better aid military veterans suffering from PTSD, the Veteran's Affairs website has some useful tips to help make sure they feel safe:

- ✓ Ask guests ahead of time if they have difficulty around the holiday;

- ✓ If a veteran friend or family member is alarmed by the loud sound of fireworks, suggest your group use sparklers instead; and

- ✓ Consider reducing or removing substances such as alcohol from 4th of July events.

For veterans feeling anxious about fireworks and other Fourth of July activities, there are many helpful videos and tips available at www.maketheconnection.net/symptoms/hypervigilance.

IN THE NEWS

Niagara-Wheatfield's community education returns this fall; looking for teachers

The events of this year have caused us to isolate ourselves

for the sake of public health and the wellbeing of the community. If you, like many of us, feel the need to reconnect with friends and neighbors after such a separation, the community education program at Niagara-Wheatfield has some good news. The month

of September will introduce the fall session of community education and bring back several popular classes as well as completely new experiences for you to enjoy. Some current learning opportunities will include: arts and crafts, do-it-yourself projects, and fitness classes.

Ever thought about teaching? New instructors are welcome to sign up and share their talents with the community. Not sure what to teach? That's OK; all ideas will be considered for the program. You may think about teaching a language class, starting a photography club, a creative writing group, share and prepare a special meal, or get some folks together for a woodworking workshop. These are just a few ideas to get you started, so think outside the box because your skills are very much appreciated.

To get started, call or email the community education coordinator with the course idea. Course proposals can be submitted on the community education website or by mail. Instructors get to set their own availability, course

goals, and cost for registration. When the course is over, instructors will be paid based on the registration fee and number of students who signed up. Applications must be submitted by July 10.

This is the chance to bring people together, to discover the satisfaction of teaching, and to live the motto of the community education program: "Never stop learning."

For more information, visit Niagara-Wheatfield's community education's website, <https://www.nwcsd.org/Page/374>, or contact community education coordinator Paul Nichols at 215-3034 or pnichols@nwcsd.org.

Memorial announces additional COVID-19 testing dates

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center announced additional drive-thru/walk-up COVID-19 community testing dates. The expanded schedule includes dates at Memorial's downtown campus,

the Summit Healthplex, Niagara University and local schools and churches. Those dates are:

- ✓ Sunday, July 5: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., True Bethel Baptist Church, 1112 South Ave.

- ✓ Friday, July 10: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Niagara Street Elementary School

- ✓ Sunday, July 12: 10 a.m. to noon, Word of Life Ministries, 1941 Hyde Park Blvd.

Ongoing regular test days are:

- ✓ Daily: 8 a.m. to noon, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center.

- ✓ Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays: 1-5 p.m., Summit Healthplex.

- ✓ Tuesdays: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Niagara University.

- ✓ Tuesdays: 1-6 p.m., Summit Healthplex.

Although on-site registration will be available, advance registration is encouraged. A prescription for the testing will be provided by the medical center upon request. For information, or to schedule a test appointment, call 278-4496.



"Viewpoint" Telephone Call-In Talk Monday - Friday 9-11 am

"VIEWPOINT" IS THE NATION'S FIRST TWO-WAY TELEPHONE TALK SHOW

Listen to NFP's editors third Wednesday around 10:15 am

Now available online at web1440.com





"Classic Country" "Ramblin' Lou Tours - "Travel with Friends"

Join your hosts Joanie, Linda Lou & Lou IV
Celebrating 50 years (1970-2020)

On behalf of the Ramblin' Lou Family and our WXRL Family & Staff, we look forward to getting back "On The Road Again" with you. Check our website at WXRL.com for tour updates, and 2021 tours as they are added. Stay well friends, and we'll see you real soon!

Sept. 27-Oct. 2 - Vermont/N. Hampshire/Maine-Acadia Nat. Park/Train Ride	Oct. 20-26 - Memphis/Graceland/Nashville/Grand Ole Opry
Oct. 6 - Spragues Maple Farm/Casino (\$25 free play & \$5 food)	Nov. 2-4 - Amish Holiday - Lancaster, PA "Queen Ester & Christmas Show"
Oct. 10-14 - Greenbrier & Elkins, WV - 2 Trains-Amtrak/Durbin Rocket	Nov. 10-12 - "Fest. of Light's-Oglebay Park/Wilson Lodge - Wheeling, WV
Oct. 12 & 13 - Thousand Islands/Boat Cruise/Ron & Nancy Onesong	Nov. 27-Dec. 1 - Nashville Country Christmas/Opryland Hotel/Grand Ole Opry

NEW 2021

January 11-21, 2021 WXRL'S SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN CRUISE
10-Night NCL Cruise Includes: 6 Ports, airfare, port taxes/charges, Transfers & amenities. Call WXRL for more details.

October 14-23, 2021 WXRL'S HAWAIIAN CRUISE 7-Night NCL Cruise plus 2 nights hotel in Honolulu prior to the Cruise. Includes 4 islands/5 ports: Oahu, Maui, Kauai & Big Island of Hawaii, airfare, port taxes/charges, transfers & amenities. Call for more details.

For a **FREE** brochure & more info, call **(716) 681-1313**
Mon-Fri 9am-5pm • wxrl.com
WE LOVE OUR COUNTRY!

BUNDLE NOW. SAVE ALL YEAR.

Now save \$30/mo. for a whole year on a bundle with DIRECTV and AT&T Internet.

\$79⁹⁸ mo.

For 12 mos. plus taxes & internet equipment fee.

For 24-mo. TV agmt. & combined bill. Autopay & Paperless bill req'd. TV price higher in 2nd year. *100mos. internet equip. fee applies. **Not Unlimited data allowance (30 value) at no add'l charge.

*\$19.95 ACTIVATION, EARLY TERMINATION FEE, \$20/MO. FOR TV FOR EACH MONTH REMAINING ON TV AGMT., EQUIPMENT NON-RETURN & ADD'L FEES APPLY. Price incl. SELECT TV Pkg., monthly service & equip. fees for 1 HD DVR & is after \$5/mo. autopay & paperless bill and \$10/mo. bundle discounts for up to 12 mos. each. Pay \$54.99/mo. + taxes and fees for TV until discounts start with 3 bills. New approved residential customers only (equipment lease req'd). Credit card req'd. Restr's apply.

CALL your AT&T Dealer Today!

1-855-993-5088

Geographic and service restrictions apply to AT&T Internet services. Not all speeds available in all areas. Call or go to www.att.com/internet to see if you qualify.

1-YR BUNDLE PRICE: Ends 6/27/20. Pricing: \$79.98/mo for first 12 mos. only. After 12 mos. or less of eligibility, then prevailing rates apply (currently \$85/mo. for SELECT TV Pkg., \$39.99/mo. for Internet), unless canceled or changed prior to end of the promo period. Must maintain all qualifying services and service addresses must match to receive advertised pricing. Pricing subject to change. \$5/mo. autopay/paperless billing discount for TV: Must enroll in autopay & paperless bill within 30 days of TV activation to receive bill credit starting in 1-3 bill cycles. First time credit will include all credits earned since meeting offer requirements. Must maintain autopay/paperless bill and valid email address to continue credits. No credits in 2nd year for bundled services. Includes: SELECT All-Included TV Pkg., Internet plans 768k to 100M, monthly service and equipment fees for one Genie HD DVR, and standard pro installation. Additional Fees & Taxes: Price excludes \$10/mo. internet equipment fee, applicable use tax expense surcharge on retail value of installation, custom installation, equipment upgrades/add-ons (min. \$99 one-time & \$7/mo. monthly fees for each extra receiver/DIRECTV Ready TV Device), and certain other add'l fees & charges. See att.com/fees for additional details. Different offers may apply for eligible multi-dwelling unit customers. *Must maintain a bundle of TV and Internet on a combined bill in order to receive unlimited data allowance at no add'l charge. Unlimited data allowance may also be purchased separately for an add'l \$30/mo. For more info, go to www.att.com/InternetUsage. DIRECTV SVC TERMS: Subject to Equipment Lease & Customer Agreements. Must maintain a min. base TV pkg of \$29.99/mo. Programming, pricing, terms and conditions subject to change at any time. Some offers may not be available through all channels and in select areas. Visit directv.com/legal or call for details. The Addams Family: ©2019 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Inc. and BRON Creative MG1, LLC. All Rights Reserved. ©2020 AT&T Intellectual Property. All Rights Reserved. AT&T, Globe logo, DIRECTV, and all other DIRECTV marks contained herein are trademarks of AT&T Intellectual Property and/or AT&T affiliated companies. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.