

# Star Spangled Cleanup

## CELEBRATE & PROTECT OUR COMMUNITY BY CLEANING UP FIREWORKS LITTER

Fireworks litter contributes to water pollution & can be harmful to our urban ecosystem. When cleaning up after a fireworks show, use this guide for the safe handling & disposal of fireworks waste.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT ?

Properly disposing of fireworks waste helps prevent it from getting washed into storm drains on the street. Water that goes down the storm drain ends up in our local streams, rivers, and other bodies of water without being filtered or treated. Because fireworks contain a variety of toxic pollutants, including heavy metals, sulfur-coal compounds, and other poisonous materials, it's important to ensure these chemicals do not end up in our local waterways where they can harm aquatic ecosystems and wildlife. Removing fireworks litter also prevents pollution in our urban ecosystems -- the neighborhoods and parks where we live and play.

### Cleanup Tips for After a Fireworks Show:

- ☐ **Prep Supplies:** Gather a large bucket or tub of water, plastic bags, garden/work gloves, and a broom + dust pan. Tip: Use a flashlight or exterior light so you can clearly see all the fireworks waste.
- ☐ **Wait:** Don't touch spent fireworks for at least 20 minutes before collecting them to ensure there are no burning materials.
- ☐ **Soak:** Fill your bucket with water, and put gloves on. Carefully collect all spent fireworks (as well as damaged, misfired, or unused fireworks) and soak them in water for at least 15 minutes or until completely saturated.
- ☐ **Bag it Up:** Seal the wet fireworks in a plastic bag. Grab a partner to help you sweep up the remaining firework dust & debris. Place the material into a plastic bag.
- ☐ **Discard in Trash:** Ideally, set your wet/bagged fireworks waste in a metal container overnight before placing it in the trash or a waste cart. Keep the trash container outside and away from any potential fire hazards.
- ☐ **Flush the Water:** Safely discard the water used to soak the fireworks by flushing it down the toilet. Do not dump the water in the street or a yard otherwise it will end up in the storm drain. Do not hose down your driveway or sidewalk.

See the Safe Fireworks Disposal Guide at [KeepOmahaBeautiful.org](https://www.KeepOmahaBeautiful.org)



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## AROUND YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Didn't set off fireworks? You can still help! Take a walk around your neighborhood and clean up the litter left behind from fireworks.

- ☐ **Bring Supplies:** Grab garden or work gloves, a few plastic bags, and a broom + dust pan to take on your walk.
- ☐ **Use Caution: Wear gloves when picking up fireworks waste.** Parents or guardians should always be present with kids under 18. Watch for cars and use caution when walking in or across streets. Don't touch any burning materials. Don't pick up or go near any firework that seems dangerous.
- ☐ **Bag it Up:** Collect litter and fireworks waste in a plastic bag as you go. When you're finished, seal the bag and discard in the trash. Keep the trash container outside and away from any potential fire hazards.



### About Stormwater Pollution

Hard surfaces do not allow water to penetrate through them and instead force rainwater and snowmelt to flow over them, carrying pollutants with them. Other sources of pollution include yard waste, pet waste, motor oil, fertilizer, and other chemicals. Help prevent water pollution around your home by keep these materials out of our storm drains. Learn more at [www.KeepOmahaBeautiful.org](http://www.KeepOmahaBeautiful.org).



### Did you know?

- \* Fireworks contain a variety of pollutants, including heavy metals, sulfur-coal compounds, and other poisonous materials.
- \* Different metal compounds create different colors at different temperatures. For example, lithium (Li) makes pink, and sodium (Na) makes yellow or orange.

### Let's talk!

- \* What did you learn while doing this activity?
- \* What happens to litter when we don't collect it?
- \* What other things get washed down storm drains?
- \* Why is cleaning up firework litter so important?
- \* How does pollution affect our urban ecosystems?