

Norfolk Insider

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“Checking out the Fireworks Stands”



He knows the difference between a chrysanthemum and a peony and neither one of them is a flower. City of Norfolk Fire Marshal Terry Zwiebel knows all the different types of fireworks, how explosive they are and if they are legal or not in Nebraska.

One of his duties as Fire Marshal is to inspect the fireworks stands in the city. This year there are 15 different stands, some of them run by people who've had stands for years and others opened by newcomers to the business. Zwiebel's task is to make sure they're all operating safely.

The first thing he wants to see when he walks up to a stand is the inventory sheet. He knows firework terms and names well enough that he can scan through the list and know if there's something being sold at the stand that shouldn't be.

There can be no bottle rockets, night time parachutes, sky rockets or wire sparklers – all of them are deemed too dangerous and are illegal in Nebraska.

Even though the fireworks stand operators don't think they are selling any of those items, Zwiebel walks through the stand picking up and inspecting various fireworks. He carefully examined the contents of one value box at a stand Thursday morning then took a box cutter out of his pocket and sliced through the plastic wrapping. He pulled out a box of sparklers and opened

one end. They had wires on them. The Pyro Shack owners had no idea and quickly removed those boxes.

Zwiebel says it happens. The stand owner doesn't package up the value packs so they can't know for sure what's in them.

Other items in the stand have to be corrected. Any fuse has to be covered up or taped so that a person can't easily light them within the stand.

He spots something new at the stand this year – sparklers in the shape of numbers that you can poke into the ground and light. Cute except that they're wire. The wire numbers are put on a shelf below the checkout stand

while Zwiebel calls to see if they're legal or not. He's pretty sure they aren't as someone could still hold the metal wire and light them.

He checks to make sure there's at least one working fire extinguisher in the stand and that there's at least two four foot wide exits out of the stand. In his eighteen years as a fire marshal there hasn't been an injury at a stand yet and he's going to do all he can to prevent any in the future.