

## Don't blow up on Fourth of July

Written by Bernie Dotson  
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Officials from around Gallup and McKinley County want everyone to be safe on the Fourth of July. It's news that's preached a lot at this time of year. Folks in Gallup typically line Hwy 602 and watch an extravagant city fireworks display from the overpass.

No doubt, local police will be out on July 4 implementing a traffic-operations plan to reduce delays and relieve congestion. Everyone must do their part, because safety isn't just a police department issue.

Expect additional officers to be present not only downtown, but throughout all parts of the city and some surrounding areas. Long traffic backups, short tempers, and some who may have had too much to drink are the norm on the Fourth — along with DWI checkpoints.

Officers will be working the major intersections of the city to assist with traffic flow, prevent bottle-necking, and to keep motorists moving safely. To ensure safety, motorists are asked to be vigilant, patient, and co-operative, and to not get upset at slow-moving vehicles.

Officers directing traffic will most likely not have a lot of time to take questions, engage in small talk, or give long-winded answers.

And then there's the actual lighting of the fireworks. As in every locale, there are those who light illegal fireworks. Everyone knows that there is nothing better than setting off bottle rockets on July 4, but that fun is marred when you are caught lighting the fuse.

The sale and use of firecrackers and cherry bombs is illegal in Gallup, and if you get caught, it could mean fines, and in some cases, jail time. There are plenty of people every July 4 who end up in the hospital with injuries from fireworks.

Next week, police won't be changing their mode of operations simply because it's the Fourth of July, but along with members of the city fire department, they will be keeping their ears wide open for the sound of illegal fireworks.

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At this time of the year, nobody can say it enough: Be careful. Stay safe and be smart with respect to lighting fireworks. Celebrate the Fourth of July safely.

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