



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Montana VA Health Care System

Montana VA Calls on all Montanans to Support Veterans with PTSD This Fourth of July Consideration with Fireworks Honors our Nations' Heroes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HELENA, Mont.— Montana VA Health Care System (Montana VA) encourages all Montanans and non-Veterans to consider Veterans and the impacts of fireworks on people with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) before they light a firework. Many people are not aware that a Fourth of July celebration could affect others, and a conversation is the simplest way to start that awareness and support people with PTSD.

“The Fourth of July can be a difficult time for our nation’s heroes because fireworks create sights, sounds and smells that can activate flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety” explained Montana VA’s Associate Chief of Staff for Mental Health Services, Dr. Robert Connell. “The sudden, sharp explosions of unexpected fireworks can create a state of hyperawareness and hypervigilance for Veterans with PTSD.”

“We encourage all Montanans, and especially non-Veterans, to be conscientious and thoughtful of our neighbors who helped earn the freedom we celebrate on the Fourth of July,” said Executive Director Dr. Judy Hayman. “Every Montanan can and should help Veterans with PTSD avoid surprise fireworks. If you plan to light fireworks on non-Fourth of July days, be considerate and have a conversation with your neighbors and let them that you would like to set off fireworks. Fireworks are expected on the Fourth of July, but not at 2:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m. in the days before and after July 4.”

For Veterans who have PTSD, these tips and resources can help:

1. If fireworks impact you, reach out to your loved ones and support systems. Let them know that you will need them to check in and be there for you.
2. Veterans who receive their healthcare from MTVAHCS can call 406-447-6000 to speak with a counselor on coping mechanisms, anxiety, flashbacks, and any other mental health support.
3. Veterans in crisis and those concerned about them can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1) to talk with qualified responders or visit veteranscrisisline.net.
4. Veterans experiencing PTSD can access a free app on their smartphones called [PTSD Coach](#), which includes coping mechanisms for PTSD.
5. Earplugs, headphones, and white noise machines can help block out the noise of fireworks.
6. Consider heading out of town to quieter places or where fireworks are not allowed.
7. More information and resources on PTSD is available at <https://ptsd.va.gov>.

Montana VA serves over 47,000 enrolled Veterans across Montana—an area roughly 147,000 square miles in size. Veterans are cared for by a staff of 1,400 at 18 sites of care across the state. One third of Montana VA employees are Veterans. Veterans can connect to their VA healthcare records, information,

and message their VA care teams 24 hours a day through the [MyHealthVet patient portal](https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/how-to-use-mhv) (<https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/how-to-use-mhv>). Montana VA information, updates, and events are available on the [Montana VA website](https://www.va.gov/montana-health-care) (<https://www.va.gov/montana-health-care>) and [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/VAMontana) (<https://www.facebook.com/VAMontana>).