To: Fireworks industry, current pyrotechnic operators and prospective operators  
Re: State Fire Marshal Division fireworks program  

The year 2020 has impacted us all in ways we could have never anticipated at the beginning of the year. With COVID-19 restrictions, the fireworks industry has been impacted particularly hard in that the entire industry revolves around large gatherings of people, both indoors and outdoors. The year 2020 is also impacting the Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD) in other ways that will also impact the fireworks industry.

With equal parts sadness and happiness, I am announcing that after 30 years of unwavering service, Nora Gierok will be retiring effective January 4th, 2021. Throughout those years and through all of the changes time brings, Nora has always been a steadfast anchor holding the various programs she worked with together and will be sorely missed by everyone. The fireworks industry and I could always count on her maintaining the pyrotechnic certification database and was always available to answers any questions received by the fireworks industry. We all wish nothing but the best for Nora as she begins a new and exciting chapter in her life.

As such and with everything that has occurred this year, the SFMD is announcing the following changed to the fireworks program.

1. Effective January 1, 2021, any questions regarding the fireworks program should be directed to Deputy Bob Rexeisen at Robert.Rexeisen@state.mn.us While Deputy Rexeisen can also be reached by telephone for immediate or emergency concerns, email is the preferred method. This will ensure that you get a prompt and accurate response and also provides you with a written record of the question and answer should that particular question come up again.

2. The SFMD is aware that due to the COVID-19 restrictions, pyrotechnic operators expiring in 2021 may not have fulfilled their required (3) displays as part of their pyrotechnic operator renewal requirements. Minnesota Statute § 624.22 Subd.7 states in part that the pyrotechnic operator shall provide evidence of at least (3) displays within the prior four years. As this is a statute, the SFMD does not have the authority to waive this requirement.
In an effort to streamline the certification renewal process for both the individual and respective fireworks companies as well as address the challenges to the industry at large, the SFMD will be changing the renewal dates for pyrotechnic operator certification effective January 1, 2021.

Currently, a pyrotechnic operator certification expires 48-months from their previous certification. Beginning in 2021, all certifications for the given year will expire December 31st of that year. In the short-term, this will help those operators who expire in 2021 yet were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions. In the long-term, this will help both the individual as well as the fireworks company keep track of expiration dates as only the year of expiration needs to be known. For those individuals who expired in 2020 and were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions, they may request in writing a 1-year time extension. Any such requests received by the SFMD shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

In January 2021, exam dates for that year will be posted to our website. The SFMD asks that the industry be flexible with these posted dates as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. All other statutory requirements such as permits, post-display reports, sponsors and at least one (1) supervising operator in possession of a valid Minnesota pyrotechnic certification remain in effect.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Robert Rexeisen
Deputy State Fire Marshal
Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division