

Dogs & Fireworks Safety: A Top Ten Survival Guide

Brought to you by Greater California German Shepherd Rescue (www.gcgsr.org) & the International Association of Canine Professionals (www.canineprofessionals.com)

The noise of fireworks can be extremely stressful for dogs. The dog professionals at IACP recommend these top ten strategies to America's dog owners, to help them through the Independence Day festivities. More dogs escape during fireworks celebrations than at any other time. With a little preparation and an understanding of how to help dogs through their fears, dog owners can help prevent their dogs from becoming frightened and lost.

1. **DO** expose your dog to loud, unexpected noises on a regular basis, especially leading up to a celebration where fireworks are used. Drop pot lids, toss a soda can with a few pennies in it, slam a door: anything to get your dog accustomed to being startled, so he can practice recovering quickly. Playing movie soundtracks like "Star Wars" can accustom your dog to varying noise levels and sudden, startling booms. Be sure to ignore his reactions so he can see they are nothing to worry about.
2. **DO NOT** bring your dog with you to a fireworks celebration.
3. **DO** provide your dog with a safe, comfortable place that will help him feel more secure amid the scary sights and sounds. Close the blinds to keep out the flashes of color in the sky, and turn up the television or play some music such as the movie soundtrack to help muffle the sounds.
4. **DO NOT** put your dog in a crate unless you'll be around to check on him; a panicked, frightened dog can easily injure himself in a crate.
5. **DO** ask your veterinarian if an herbal remedy, natural supplement, or prescription sedative may be appropriate for your dog. Anxiety Wraps may also help.
6. **DO** consider giving your dog a soothing massage before and during the fireworks celebration, which may help to keep him calm.
7. **DO** attach a "house leash" to your dog, to act as an extra long handle, should your dog try to escape or run away if you will be home with him.
8. **DO NOT** comfort or "baby" your dog if he is afraid. Dogs take their cue of how to behave from their owners; if you are acting "strange" by offering soothing words and gestures, your dog may interpret your actions as praise for being frightened, or a confirmation that the fireworks are truly scary. Stay calm and relaxed.
9. **DO** act as normal and as "matter of fact" as possible, to help your dog understand that there is nothing to worry about.
10. **Most importantly, DO** ensure your dog is wearing proper identification in case he manages to escape.

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