

About This Checklist

Fireworks can be terrifying for outdoor cats who have no safe indoor space to retreat. With hearing three times more sensitive than humans, these sudden explosions trigger panic responses that can lead to injury, disorientation, and even death. This checklist provides colony caretakers and rescuers with practical steps to protect community cats during fireworks season.

Best Time to Use: Start preparations 1-2 weeks before expected fireworks displays (July 4th, New Year's Eve, local celebrations).

Pre-Fireworks Preparation (1-2 Weeks Before)

Community Outreach and Education

- **Identify your neighbors** who may be planning fireworks celebrations.
- **Create simple flyers** explaining how fireworks affect outdoor cats.
- **Share information on social media** about fireworks impacts on community animals.
- **Reach out to HOAs or neighborhood groups** to spread awareness about cat safety.
- **Post signs near colony areas** asking for consideration during celebrations.

Shelter Assessment and Improvement

- **Survey existing cat shelters** in your care areas for structural integrity.
- **Identify quieter locations away** from main roads and typical fireworks display areas.
- **Relocate portable shelters** to more secluded, sound-buffered spots if possible.
- **Reinforce existing shelters** with additional insulation or windbreaks.
- **Create backup shelter options** using plastic bins, crates, or cardboard boxes.
- **Ensure all shelters** have multiple exits to prevent cats from feeling trapped.

Resource Stockpiling

- **Stock up on extra food** for emergency feeding situations.
- **Prepare multiple water containers** in case cats avoid usual drinking spots.
- **Gather sound-dampening materials** like straw, cardboard, or old blankets (*avoid fabric that retains moisture*).
- **Collect additional shelter materials** for quick setup if needed.
- **Prepare first aid supplies** for potential minor injuries from panicked flight.

48 Hours Before Fireworks

Final Shelter Preparations

- **Add sound insulation** to existing shelters using straw or cardboard layers.
- **Position shelters** with openings facing away from expected fireworks directions.
- **Create multiple hiding spots** in different areas to give cats options.
- **Ensure adequate ventilation** while maintaining sound-dampening qualities.
- **Test shelter stability** to ensure they won't collapse if cats rush inside.

Safety Zone Creation

- **Clear debris** from around shelter areas that could cause injury during panic.
- **Remove or secure any loose objects** that could become hazards.
- **Check for escape routes** that lead away from roads and dangerous areas.
- **Identify potential trap hazards** like fencing gaps or construction areas.
- **Mark safe pathways mentally** for post-fireworks searches if cats disappear.

Day of Fireworks

Morning and Afternoon Tasks

- **Feed cats earlier than usual** (*complete feeding 2-3 hours before expected fireworks*).
- **Provide fresh water** in multiple shaded locations.
- **Do final shelter checks** to ensure everything is secure and accessible.
- **Remove food dishes** after feeding to avoid attracting cats to open areas later.
- **Avoid any trapping activities** scheduled for this day.
- **Cancel routine veterinary appointments** that would require transporting stressed cats.

Evening Preparations (Before Dark)

- **Secure all feeding stations** and remove attractants from open areas.
- **Do a final visual check** of all cats in your care if possible.
- **Ensure water sources** are available near shelter areas.
- **Position yourself** where you can monitor cats' general area if feasible.
- **Have emergency supplies ready** including flashlight, first aid kit, and carrier.

During Fireworks Display

- **Remain calm and quiet** if monitoring cats from a distance.
- **Avoid approaching cats** during active fireworks unless there's immediate danger.
- **Keep noise to minimum** if you must move around the area.
- **Document any cats** that flee or appear distressed for follow-up.
- **Stay alert** for signs of injury or cats in immediate danger.

Post-Fireworks Recovery (Next Day and Following Week)

Immediate Assessment (Next Morning)

- Conduct headcount of usual colony members at normal feeding times.
- Look for signs of injury in cats that are present.
- Check shelters for damage or cats that may be hiding inside.
- Search nearby areas for any missing cats using familiar calls or sounds.
- Document any missing cats with descriptions and last seen locations.

Extended Recovery Support

- Resume normal feeding schedules gradually over 2-3 days.
- Provide extra food for cats that may have missed meals while hiding.
- Monitor behavior changes in cats that experienced trauma.
- Continue searching for missing cats for at least one week.
- Post on social media and lost pet networks if cats remain missing.
- Check with neighbors who may have found scared cats in their yards.

Medical Follow-Up

- Watch for stress-related symptoms like loss of appetite, lethargy, or hiding.
- Schedule veterinary care for any cats showing signs of injury.
- Delay routine trapping for 3-5 days to allow cats to return to normal patterns.
- Consider stress-relief supplements for cats showing ongoing anxiety.
- Provide extra comfort items like familiar bedding in shelter areas.

Long-Term Prevention Strategies

Community Building

- Build relationships with neighbors who were receptive to cat safety information.
- Create annual reminder system for recurring fireworks holidays.
- Work with local government on noise ordinances or designated fireworks areas.
- Connect with other rescuers to coordinate area-wide protection efforts.
- Document successful strategies for future use and sharing.

Infrastructure Improvements

- Invest in permanent shelters with better sound insulation.
- Create cat-friendly landscaping with natural sound barriers and hiding spots.
- Establish feeding stations in naturally quieter areas.
- Build relationships with property owners who might allow shelter placement.
- Develop emergency protocols for extreme weather or noise events.

Emergency Contacts Template

Fill out this section before fireworks season:

Emergency Veterinarian:

Phone:

24-Hour Animal Hospital:

Phone:

Other Colony Caretakers:

Phone:

Local Animal Control:

Phone:

Backup Transportation:

Phone:

Remember

Don't give up too soon searching for missing cats. You're their only hope.

- Stress can suppress immune systems, making cats more vulnerable to illness.
- Some cats may permanently relocate after severe fireworks trauma.
- Prevention and preparation are more effective than reaction.
- Your calm presence during recovery helps cats feel secure.

Every cat deserves to feel safe. Your preparation and dedication during fireworks season can mean the difference between trauma and security for the community cats in your care.

This checklist is provided by **GILUFUNDS** to support community cat caretakers during challenging times. Share this resource with other rescuers and advocates in your area.

For additional resources and ongoing support, visit: <https://gilucats.com/blog/>