

A sneak peek at the record-breaking DC fireworks show planned for July 4

NEW CASTLE, PA, UNITED STATES, June 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A rainbow of colors will burst over Washington, DC, on July 4 in what organizers say will be the largest fireworks show the world has ever seen. For 40 minutes, flares of light will sweep across the sky above the National Mall.

The explosives will launch from 10 locations, including eight barges in the Potomac River and several spots in West Potomac Park. They'll also line the Reflecting Pool, creating a runway-like stream of pops, crackles and fizzes framing the Lincoln Memorial.

The capital city's typical Independence Day show lasts about 18 minutes and includes some 10,000 pyrotechnics. This year's 250th anniversary celebration will use more than 860,000.

"No matter how many times I watch through it, I still see things that I didn't see the first time," Jason Farrell, one of the show's designers, told USA TODAY during a recent visit to the New Castle facility where the show is being put together.



Pyrotecnico gave USA TODAY an exclusive sneak peek at its planned 40-minute Fourth of July fireworks show along the National Mall.



Stephen Vitale, CEO of Pyrotecnico, poses for a portrait in his company's warehouse in New Castle, Pa. Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

Freedom 250, a White House-backed nonprofit planning the milestone celebration, tapped the

sixth-generation family-run company Pyrotecnico to develop the dazzling spectacle.

The only request they received? Beat the Philippines' 2016 record for the [largest fireworks display in history](#).

USA TODAY got a behind-the-scenes look at the show and talked with Pyrotecnico about what goes into putting on an extravaganza display.

Tucked away on an unassuming back road, surrounded by acres of grassy expanse and residential homes, Pyrotecnico's New Castle facility houses hundreds of thousands of pounds of explosives. It is one of 13 locations the company operates across the country.

Light poles scattered around the property are more than a half-century old. The U.S. government installed them during World War II when Pyrotecnico transitioned its production to create flares for the war effort.

In white and blue shipping containers, cardboard boxes filled with different fireworks are stacked neatly.

Michael Fox, vice president of operations at Pyrotecnico, has spent more than 40 years ensuring every piece is accounted for.

On a particularly sunny recent Tuesday afternoon, he and employee Aaron Troutman stood in a small building packing and labeling fireworks for an upcoming July 4 show in Raleigh, North Carolina.

It is one of the roughly 700 shows the company will put on for small towns and private groups during the weekend of celebrations.

Fox and Troutman picked up egg-shaped, 4-inch and 6-inch shells. Each piece passes through at least eight sets of hands before it launches in the air, Fox said.

The duo placed labels on each piece with information about its exact location in the show. Eventually, they'll all get hooked up to igniters and computer wires. Controllers will be able to set them off with the push of a button.



Boxes of fireworks sit in a container at Pyrotecnico in New Castle, Pennsylvania, on May 19, 2026.

Once one show is packed and ready, they begin the next. Soon, they'll start the same process to package and load Washington's fireworks show onto semi-trucks.

"To get a minute, it's hours," Fox said.

For Farrell, the first "wow" moment creating the July 4 show came just a few weeks into the planning when his laptop unexpectedly crashed. He'd used the machine to design displays for the Super Bowl, [Formula 1 Las Vegas Grand Prix](#) and New Year's Eve, among other major events. But this time, it couldn't handle what he had in mind.

"This opens any other show we've ever done. And it will not open this show," Farrell said with a laugh.

That was about six months ago.

He and a team of other designers at Pyrotecnico brainstormed how they could dazzle those gathered on the Mall and the millions expected to watch on TV.

They decided on a panorama of fireworks sweeping over some of the city's most iconic monuments. Each of the 10 locations would blast off about the same amount of pyrotechnics as a typical Fourth of July show in a midsize city.

"Breaking a record is incredibly important, but what we really want to do is have people walk away believing they saw the best fireworks display of their lives," said Stephen Vitale, CEO of Pyrotecnico.

Next, they handpicked rockets, candles and fountains, choosing some from China, Italy and Spain that few people in the United States have seen. Early renderings show some of the fireworks cascading like a water sprinkler, and others moving and bursting in the sky in strange patterns.

Designers paired those larger shells with smaller features closer to the ground to give viewers multiple spots to look during the lengthy show. And they timed everything to flow with music.

Thousands of hours went into producing the final version, and Vitale said the team will continue tweaking it in the coming weeks.

The work, he said, is "about looking at a family on a picnic blanket, and the fascination they see in the lights and the sound and the noise."

Here's hoping the weather cooperates.

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