



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Fireworks can cause serious injury to children

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Melissa Khan
(334) 206-5541
molmstead@adph.state.al.us

During the Fourth of July holiday people often celebrate with fireworks, but if used improperly fireworks can cause serious injury or burns. To ensure a safe holiday the Alabama Department of Public Health recommends that parents protect children from injury by preventing them from using fireworks and leaving it to the professionals.

"Although many fireworks may seem harmless, most children do not have the ability to properly handle them," said Carol Mysinger, director of the Injury Prevention Division at the Alabama Department of Public Health. "Parents should be aware that fireworks-related injuries can result in amputations, blindings or even death."

According to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign almost 5,000 children ages 14 and under are treated in the emergency room for fireworks-related injuries each year. Sixty-five percent of these injuries occur during the month surrounding the Fourth of July.

"Over half of the injuries that occur in children result from their either being too close when fireworks are ignited, lack of physical coordination, curiosity or unsupervised use," said Melissa Khan, epidemiologist in the Injury Prevention Division.

The safest way to enjoy a fireworks display is at a community-sanctioned, licensed

event. Alabama law allows only consumer fireworks, formerly known as class C fireworks. Some municipalities (including Montgomery) outlaw fireworks altogether.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission prevents large numbers of hazardous fireworks from reaching consumers. Illegal mail order kits contain chemical mixtures that can explode unexpectedly and violently. M-80s, cherry bombs and quarter sticks are so highly explosive that they have been banned by federal law since 1966. Working with the U.S. Customs Service since 1988, CPSC has seized or detained more than 400 million hazardous fireworks at docks across the country.

If fireworks are legal where you live and you decide to set them off on your own, be sure to follow these important safety tips:

- * Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- * Read and follow all warnings and instructions.
- * Discuss safety procedures with children, including teaching them to "stop, drop and roll."

- * Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- * Never aim or throw fireworks at another person.
- * Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from the house, dry leaves and flammable materials.
- * Never try to relight fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- * Keep a bucket of water nearby in case of a malfunction or fire.

06/28/04