



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Prevent injuries by handling fireworks with care**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Fireworks are a traditional part of America's celebration of Independence Day on July 4. Although legal consumer fireworks that comply with Consumer Product Safety Commission regulations can be relatively safe, all fireworks are hazardous and can cause injury. In 2007, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 9,800 people for fireworks-related injuries. Of these injuries 56 percent were injuries to extremities while 36 percent were to the head.

"Be sure to read and follow directions on fireworks labels to understand what they do," said State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. "Serious injuries caused by handling fireworks include loss of vision, amputation of fingers, and even death."

#### **Who gets hurt?**

- Those most frequently injured by fireworks are children between the ages of 5 and 14 years old.
- Males accounted for three-fourths (70 percent) of fireworks injuries.
- In 2007, sparklers, fountains and novelties alone accounted for 36 percent of emergency-room fireworks injuries.

#### **What kinds of injuries occurred in 2007?**

- 56 percent of emergency room fireworks-related injuries were to the extremities while 36 percent were to the head.
- 49 percent of fireworks injuries were burns, while 29 percent were contusions and lacerations.

#### **Which kinds of fireworks are the most dangerous?**

- In 2007, 9 out of 10 (92 percent) of emergency room fireworks injuries involved fireworks that federal regulations permit consumers to use.
- The remaining 8 percent were illegal firecrackers, homemade or altered devices, and public display fireworks.

- Fireworks-related injuries are most commonly associated with small firecrackers (18 percent), fireworks rockets (18 percent), and sparklers (22 percent).

### **Safety Tips**

The best way to prevent fireworks-related injuries is to leave fireworks displays to the trained professionals. But for those who participate, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and the National Council on Fireworks Safety have issued these tips:

- Do not let children under 14 use fireworks.
- Supervise individuals under age 18.
- Only buy from reliable fireworks sellers; read and follow all the warnings and instructions.
- Use fireworks outdoors only; keep them away from houses and flammable materials.
- Have a bucket of water nearby.
- Do NOT try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak them in water and throw them away.
- Be sure other people are a safe distance away before lighting fireworks.
- Never ignite fireworks in a container -- especially a glass or metal one.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place according to their specific storage instructions.
- Never experiment or attempt to make your own fireworks.
- Do not wear loose clothing near a fire or while using fireworks.
- Rockets should be launched from a rocket launcher not a bottle.
- Sparklers need to be handled carefully too: they burn at more than 1,000 degrees F. Light them one at a time at arm's length. Always wear gloves while holding a sparkler, and never give one to a child under 5 years of age.
- Educate children (of all ages) about the dangers of fireworks and teach them to practice safety at all times.