



Focus on Fire Safety: Fireworks



Every year in the United States, we celebrate the Fourth of July with community parades, picnics, barbecues, and fireworks - the things of which happy memories are made. But sadly, Independence Day also includes tragic events resulting from fireworks use. The safest way to enjoy them is through public displays conducted by professional pyrotechnicians hired by communities. Learning fireworks safety tips can help ensure that everyone has a happy and safe summer holiday.

By the Numbers: Fireworks

30,100 Estimated number of fires caused by fireworks each year

7,000 Estimated number of injuries caused by fireworks in 2008

7 Fireworks-related deaths occurred in 2008

\$34 million Amount of direct property loss caused by fireworks

Sources: National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

Who is at Most Risk?

In 2008, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 7,000 people for fireworks-related injuries. 70% of these injuries occurred between June 20 - July 20. Of these:

- 46% of injuries were to the extremities and 36% were to the head.
- 56% were burns, while 21% were contusions and lacerations.
- Two of 5 people injured by fireworks were under the age of 15.
- 62% of injuries were to males; 38% were to females.
- Devices such as sparklers, fountains, roman candles, and novelties accounted for 40% of injuries; firecrackers caused 18% of injuries.

How and Why Do These Injuries Occur?

Did You Know? The tip of a sparkler burns at a temperature of more than 1,200 degrees – this is hot enough to cause third degree burns.



- **Availability:** In spite of federal regulations and varying state prohibitions, many types of fireworks are still accessible to the public. Distributors often sell fireworks near state borders, where laws prohibiting sales on either side of the border may differ.
- **Fireworks type:** Among the various types of fireworks, some of which are sold legally in some states, bottle rockets can fly into peoples' faces and cause eye injuries; sparklers can ignite clothing (sparklers burn at more than 1,000°F); and firecrackers can injure the hands or face if they explode at close range.
- **Being too close:** Injuries may result from being too close to fireworks when they explode; for example, when someone leans over to look more closely at a firework that has been ignited, or when a misguided bottle rocket hits a nearby person.
- **Lack of physical coordination:** Younger children often lack the physical coordination to handle fireworks safely.
- **Curiosity:** Children are often excited and curious around fireworks, which can increase their chances of being injured (for example, when they re-examine a firecracker dud that initially fails to ignite).
- **Experimentation:** Homemade fireworks (for example, ones made of the powder from several firecrackers) can lead to dangerous and unpredictable explosions.

What Can I Do?

Did You Know?

92% of the fireworks injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms involved fireworks that Federal regulations permit consumers to use.

- The best way to protect your family is not to use any fireworks at home — period. Attend public fireworks displays and leave the lighting to the professionals.
- Kids should never play with fireworks. Sparklers can reach 1,800° Fahrenheit (982° Celsius) — hot enough to melt gold.
- Steer clear of others — fireworks have been known to backfire or shoot off in the wrong direction. Never throw or point fireworks at someone, even in jest.
- Don't allow kids to pick up pieces of fireworks after an event. Some may still be ignited and can explode at any time.
- Think about your pet. Animals have sensitive ears and can be extremely frightened or stressed on the Fourth of July. Keep pets indoors to reduce the risk that they'll run loose or get injured.

Source: <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/focus/fireworks.shtm>

