



*Our vision is to preserve
a lifetime of sight for all Georgians, especially
children, seniors, and
those unable to access eye care,
through vision screenings,
eye exams, and education.*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIREWORKS POSE DANGEROUS RISKS, ESPECIALLY TO CHILDREN

More than 40 Percent of all Fireworks Injuries are to Children Under the Age of 15

ATLANTA (July 1, 2009) – With Fourth of July celebrations this Saturday, Prevent Blindness Georgia is urging the public to refrain from purchasing or using fireworks. In 2008, approximately 7,000 Americans were treated in emergency rooms across the country due to fireworks-related injuries around the Independence Day holiday, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Unfortunately, more than 40 percent of all fireworks injuries were to children under the age of 15. In fact, sparklers accounted for the most injuries that required medical attention to children ages 4 and under. Some may be surprised to learn that sparklers were associated with the most number of injuries to both adults and children. According to the National Fire Protection Association, “safe and sane” fireworks caused more injuries than illegal fireworks, especially to preschool children.

The second most common injury from fireworks is to the eyes, including contusions and lacerations, debris in the eye and burns. For example, a case was reported to the CPSC regarding a 6-year-old girl who was holding a Roman candle firework. The sparks that emitted from the Roman candle entered her eye and she required immediate medical treatment from an emergency room.

“We hear the term ‘safe and sane’ fireworks and think that they are harmless, but a sparkler can burn at up to 1,800 degrees,” said Jenny Pomeroy, CEO of Prevent Blindness Georgia. “Roman candles, firecrackers and bottle rockets may seem enticing, especially to children. But they can be very dangerous and that is why

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Prevent Blindness Georgia wants to make sure that consumers are aware of these dangers and make sure they protect their eyes.”

Tragically, fireworks can go beyond injuries and even result in death. In 2007, a 7-year-old boy was killed when a 2-inch mortar shell tipped over just before igniting and struck the boy in the chest. And, a 4-year-old boy died after lighting fireworks he found in a closet. The intense heat of the fire in the home prevented rescuers from reaching him in time.

Prevent Blindness Georgia urges everyone to attend only authorized public fireworks displays conducted by licensed operators. Attendees should also be aware, however, that even professional displays can be hazardous and should use extreme caution.

Prevent Blindness Georgia offers its “First Aid for Eye Emergencies” sticker in both English and Spanish, free to the public and recommends the following should an eye injury occur:

If there are specks in the eye,

- DO NOT rub the eye.
- Use an eye wash or let tears wash out specks or particles;
- Lift the upper eyelid outward and down over the lower lid;
- If the speck doesn't wash out, keep the eye closed, bandage and see a doctor or go to the emergency room.

If the eye or eyelid is cut or punctured,

- DO NOT wash out the eye with water.
- DO NOT try to remove an object stuck in the eye.
- Cover the eye with a rigid shield without pressure. The bottom half of a paper cup may be used. See a doctor or go to the emergency room immediately.

Prevent Blindness Georgia also offers a free brochure, “Safe Summer Celebrations” with creative ideas for the family on how to celebrate the holiday without fireworks. For a free copy of the Safe Summer Celebrations brochure, more information on fireworks safety or to request a First Aid for Eye Emergencies sticker, call 404.266.2020 or visit www.pbga.org.

About Prevent Blindness Georgia

Prevent Blindness Georgia was founded in 1965 as the state affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization. Its mission is to prevent blindness and preserve sight for the residents of Georgia through vision screenings for children and adults, eye exams and glasses for indigent seniors, the homeless, and working poor adults, public education on eye health and safety to persons at risk for eye disease, and vision screening training. To donate to the good work of Prevent Blindness Georgia, visit www.pbga.org.

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