



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 28, 2007**

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## **PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND THE OHIO EYE CARE COALITION URGES EVERYONE TO CELEBRATE THE FOURTH OF JULY SAFELY WITHOUT FIREWORKS**

**Columbus** – Prevent Blindness Ohio, the Ohio Eye Care Coalition, and State Fire Marshal Michael Bell partnered together at the Ohio Statehouse today to remind Ohioans to prevent injury this year by avoiding backyard fireworks. In 2006, 9,200 people were sent to the emergency room for treatment of firework-related injuries and there were 11 associated deaths. There has been a significant upward trend in fireworks injuries since 1996 when 7,300 people were treated for firework injuries.

“In response to the increase in injuries due to backyard fireworks, Prevent Blindness America strengthened its Fireworks Position Statement this past year calling for a total BAN on backyard fireworks, rather than just restricting their use,” said Sherill Williams, President & CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “We also now include “sparklers” in the backyard fireworks category, even though they are legal to use in most states and widely available at grocery and department stores. Over 1,000 serious injuries occurred last year due to use of sparklers and one-third were to children under the age of 5!”

Forty-seven percent of the 9,200 fireworks injuries last year were to children and young adults 20 years and younger according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Fireworks Annual Report. Eyes were the second most commonly injured part of the body with 1,500 injuries. Sparklers and Roman Candles, sold in many grocery and department stores, caused over 25% of the eye injuries.

“The most important message this 4<sup>th</sup> of July season is a message of safety,” said State Fire Marshal Michael P. Bell. “The Division of State Fire Marshal encourages everyone to enjoy the holiday by attending a licensed, public exhibition of fireworks.”

There are three types of fireworks in Ohio, all of which are hazardous: Trick and novelty items such as sparklers and snakes that can be legally sold and used by anyone; exhibitor fireworks which require a license to sell, purchase and use; and consumer class fireworks such as bottle rockets and roman candles, which require a license to sell. Consumer fireworks can be purchased by anyone over 18, but must be removed from the state within a certain timeframe and cannot be legally discharged in Ohio. A list of frequently asked questions on fireworks is available in the press room at [www.com.state.oh.us/sfm](http://www.com.state.oh.us/sfm).

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**Consumers should know that:**

- Firecrackers (1,300), sparklers (1,000) and bottle rockets (800) accounted for the most injuries last year.
- The major causes of injuries are due to delayed or early fireworks explosions, errant flight paths of rockets, debris from aerial fireworks and mishandling of sparklers.
- Backyard sparklers, often given to young children, burn at 1800 degrees — hot enough to melt gold.
- Sparklers accounted for over one-third of the injuries of children less than 5 years of age.
- Half of all fireworks injuries are to innocent bystanders.

**Fireworks Safety Tips for Consumers:**

- Do not purchase, use or store fireworks of any type. Protect yourself, your family, and your friends by avoiding fireworks.
- Attend only authorized public fireworks displays, but be aware that even professional displays can be dangerous.

Prevent Blindness Ohio is celebrating 50 years as Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. Founded in 1957 by U.S. Senator John Bricker and Lion's Club Member, Bob Morrison with support from Nationwide, the Ohio Department of Health and Delta Gamma Fraternity, PBO serves all 88 Ohio counties. We provide direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educate millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country's second-oldest national voluntary health organization. For more information or to make a contribution, visit our website at [www.pbohio.org](http://www.pbohio.org) or call 800-301-2020.

The **Ohio Eye Care Coalition (OECC)** is a group of organizations that work together to provide a forum for discussion and action on vision care policies and programs geared to enhancing the eye health and safety status for all Ohioans. Members include Ohio Ophthalmological Society, Ohio Optometric Association, Opticians Association of Ohio and Prevent Blindness Ohio. Facilitation is provided by The Ohio Department of Health.

**Ohio Department of Commerce:** A list of frequently asked questions on fireworks is available in the press room at [www.com.state.oh.us/sfm](http://www.com.state.oh.us/sfm).

The **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission 2006 Annual Fireworks Report** is available in full at <http://www.cpsc.gov/LIBRARY/2006fwreport.pdf>

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