



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WARNING: BACKYARD FIREWORKS ARE DANGEROUS
*Prevent Blindness Ohio Urge Everyone to Celebrate
The Fourth of July Safely*

COLUMBUS— Last year, approximately 6,300 Americans spent part of their Fourth of July holiday in the emergency room, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Despite warnings to consumers on the dangers of fireworks, the number of injuries are not decreasing. The long-term effects of these injuries can be severe. In fact, the American Society of Ocular Trauma states that an average of 400 Americans permanently lose vision in one or both eyes due to fireworks injuries annually.

Sadly, children ages 15 and younger make up a significant number of fireworks injuries, accounting for 42 percent. For children under the age of 5, half of the total injuries were from sparklers. Many parents may not be aware that sparklers can burn up to 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit.

The National Fire Protection Association found that fireworks referred to as “safe and sane” cause more injuries than illegal fireworks, especially to preschool children. In addition, nine out of ten injuries that required emergency treatment were from fireworks that were approved by Federal regulations. Among different fireworks, sparklers were associated with the greatest number of estimated injuries at 1,100. Firecrackers and rockets were associated with 1,000 and 900 injuries each, respectively.

"Every legally available backyard firework has been associated with serious injury and death," said Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, and an associate professor of pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

"While people may think that backyard fireworks are safe if only adults handle them, our study found that one-quarter of the injuries occurred to children who were bystanders. These children were not using the fireworks themselves and yet they were still injured. Adult supervision is not enough." added Dr. Smith.

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Prevent Blindness Ohio supports the development and enforcement of bans on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks and sparklers, except those used in authorized public displays by competent licensed operators. The group believes it is the only effective means of eliminating the social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and damage.

“Prevent Blindness Ohio supports a total BAN on backyard fireworks, including sparklers, which are widely available at grocery and department stores,” said Sherill Williams, President & CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “Over 1,000 serious injuries occurred last year due to use of sparklers and half were to children under the age of 5!”

Fireworks Safety Facts:

- In 2007, 9,800 people were sent to the emergency room for treatment of firework-related injuries; 11 were associated deaths.
- 6,300 of the injuries (64 percent) occurred during a one month period around the Fourth of July Holiday.
- Firecrackers (1,000), sparklers (1,100) and rockets (900) accounted for the most injuries last year.
- The part of the body most often injured were hands (estimated 2,000 injuries), eyes (1,400), and the legs (1,200).
- Bottle rockets, firecrackers, sparklers and roman candles account for most eye injuries.
- Backyard sparklers, often given to young children, burn at 1800 degrees—hot enough to melt gold.
- Sparklers accounted for half of the injuries of children less than 5 years old.
- 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.
- In 2007, fireworks sparked 209 fires in Ohio that caused an estimated \$618,000 in damage.

Prevent Blindness Ohio has these tips to help prevent fireworks-related injuries:

- Do not purchase, use or store fireworks of any type.
- Be aware that even sparklers are dangerous and cause one half of fireworks injuries in children five years old and younger.
- Protect yourself, your family and your friends by avoiding fireworks.
- Attend only authorized public fireworks displays conducted by licensed operators, but be aware that even professional displays can be dangerous.
- Support policies that ban the importation, general sale and indiscriminate usage of fireworks by children and adults.

The Ohio Eye Care Coalition offers the following guidance in responding to eye injuries:

- Do not delay medical attention, even for seemingly mild injuries. “Mild” injuries can worsen and end in vision loss or even blindness that might not have occurred had a doctor provided treatment early on.
- Do not rub the eye nor attempt to rinse out the eye. Instead, shield the eye from pressure. Tape or secure the bottom of a foam cup, milk carton or similar shield against the bones surrounding the eye, including the brow, cheek and bridge of the nose.

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- Avoid giving aspirin or ibuprofen to try to reduce the pain. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs thin the blood and might increase bleeding. Acetaminophen is the over-the-counter drug of choice.
- Do not apply ointment or any medication. It is probably not sterile. Also, ointments make the eye area slippery, which could slow the doctor's examination at a time when every second counts.

Prevent Blindness Ohio, Center for Injury Research and Policy in the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, Division of State Fire Marshal and the Ohio Eye Care Coalition will hold their annual Fireworks Safety Press Conference on **Tuesday, July 1, 2008, at 10:00 a.m. in the Ohio Statehouse Atrium** to caution and educate Ohioans about the dangers of backyard fireworks. For more information call Andrea Albanese Denning at 800-301-2020, ext. 119 or email andreaa@pbohio.org. The 2007 U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission fireworks report will be released at the **Fireworks Safety Press Conference on July 1, 2008**.

For a free copy of the Safe Summer Celebrations brochure, offering fun, fireworks-free activities for families, or more information on fireworks safety, call Prevent Blindness Ohio at 800-301-2020 or visit www.pbohio.org.

Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. We serve all 88 Ohio counties, providing direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educating 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 or call 800-301-2020.

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