



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 27, 2008

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MEDIA ADVISORY

WARNING: Backyard Fireworks are Dangerous **PRESS CONFERENCE** **Tuesday, July 1, 2008**

COLUMBUS – Last year, nearly 10,000 people were sent to the emergency room for treatment of firework-related injuries. Speakers will caution and educate Ohioans about the dangers of backyard fireworks. All media are invited. A question and answer session will immediately follow the last speaker. Continental breakfast provided.

WHO: **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**

WHAT: **Fireworks Safety Press Conference**

WHEN: **Tuesday, July 1, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.**

WHERE: **Ohio Statehouse Atrium**

Speakers

- **Dr. Gary Smith, Director, Center for Injury Research and Policy in the Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital**
- **Sherill K. Williams, President & CEO, Prevent Blindness Ohio**
- **Donald Cooper, Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal, Ohio Department of Commerce**
- **Dr. Gilbert E. Pierce, Associate Professor of Clinical Optometry, The Ohio State University**

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.
- 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.

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.

The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) works at the local to international levels to reduce death and disability due to injuries through research, education, advocacy and advances in clinical care. CIRP aims to improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, prevention, acute treatment, rehabilitation and biomechanics of injuries. CIRP educates health and other professionals, policy makers, and the public regarding the importance of injuries, injury research, and injury prevention. CIRP provides leadership in the development, implementation and scientific evaluation of public policy regarding control of injuries. CIRP provides leadership and technical assistance in injury research and prevention science. Learn more about CIRP at <http://www.injurycenter.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.