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WARNING: Backyard Fireworks are Dangerous

***PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO, DIVISION OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL,
THE OHIO EYE CARE COALITION, AND THE CENTER FOR INJURY
RESEARCH AND POLICY IN THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
AT NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
URGE EVERYONE TO CELEBRATE THE FOURTH OF JULY SAFELY***

COLUMBUS – Prevent Blindness Ohio, Division of State Fire Marshal, the Ohio Eye Care Coalition, and the Center for Injury Research and Policy in the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital have joined forces at the Ohio Statehouse today to educate Ohioans about the dangers of backyard fireworks. In 2007, 9,800 people were sent to the emergency room for treatment of firework-related injuries. Sixty-four percent of these injuries (6,300 injuries) occurred during the one month period surrounding the July 4th Holiday and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) claims injuries are on an upward trend.

Injuries to children under 15 accounted for 42 percent of the estimated firework-related injuries according to the CPSC Fireworks 2007 Annual Report. Children under 5 years old experienced an estimated 400 injuries from sparklers. The part of the body most often injured were hands (estimated 2,000 injuries), eyes (1,400), and the legs (1,200).

"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 five!"

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.

"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.

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“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.

“The most important message this 4th 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.”

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.

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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.

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>.*

The **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Annual Report** is available in full at <http://www.cpsc.gov/library/2007fwreport.pdf>

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