



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WARNING: BACKYARD FIREWORKS ARE DANGEROUS

***FIREWORKS POSE DANGEROUS RISKS,
ESPECIALLY TO CHILDREN***

COLUMBUS, OH (June 17, 2009) – As the Fourth of July approaches, Prevent Blindness Ohio urges the public to refrain from purchasing or using backyard fireworks. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), approximately 6,300 Americans were treated in emergency rooms across the country in 2007 as a result of fireworks-related injuries around the Independence Day holiday. Fireworks injuries sustained around the Fourth of July Holiday account for 64% of all annual fireworks injuries.

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 five 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-aged children.

The second most common injury from fireworks is to the eyes, including contusions and lacerations, debris in the eye, and burns. Tragically, fireworks can go beyond injuries and even result in death. In 2007, a seven-year-old boy was killed when a two-inch mortar shell tipped over just before igniting and struck the boy in the chest. A four-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. On Independence Day in a typical year, more U.S. fires are reported than on any other day and fireworks account for half of those fires, which is more than any other cause of fires.

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“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 causing over 1,000 serious injuries just last year,” said Sherry Williams, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “Prevent Blindness Ohio supports a total ban on backyard fireworks, including sparklers, which are widely available at grocery and department stores,” said Williams.

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 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 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, 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, June 30, 2009, 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 Stacie Lehman at 800-301-2020, ext. 105 or email staciel@pbohio.org. **The 2008 U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission fireworks report will be released at the Fireworks Safety Press Conference on June 30, 2009.**

Prevent Blindness Ohio 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 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.

Fireworks Safety PSA

:30 Seconds

Backyard fireworks ARE dangerous. Did you know that a sparkler burns at 1800-degrees Fahrenheit - hot enough to melt gold? Children allowed to play with or around these dangerous devices can suffer serious eye and other injuries and even death! Prevent Blindness Ohio wants you to be SAFE this Fourth of July! There are precautions you can take to avoid ending a day of fun by taking a trip to the emergency room or worse! The best way to prevent accidents is to avoid handling ALL fireworks. Visit www.pbohio.org or call 1-800-301-2020 for a free fireworks safety booklet or more information

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.
- Injuries to children were a major component of total fireworks-related injuries with children under 15 accounting for 42 percent of the estimated injuries.
- Children and young adults under 20 had 54 percent of the estimated injuries.
- More than half of the injuries were burns. Burns were the most common injury to all parts of the body except the eyes, where contusions, lacerations and foreign bodies in the eye occurred more frequently.
- Males accounted for 70 percent of fireworks injuries.
- 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.

Other Fireworks Information

- On Independence Day in a typical year, more U.S. fires are reported than on any other day, and fireworks account for half of those fires, more than any other cause of fires, according to the National Fire Protection Agency.
- In 2007, fireworks sparked 209 fires in Ohio that caused an estimated \$618,000 in damage.
- The best defense against kids suffering severe eye injuries and burns is to not let kids play with any fireworks.
- 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 conducted by licensed operators, but be aware that even professional displays can be dangerous.
- Prevent Blindness America supports the development and enforcement of bans on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks, except those used in authorized public displays by licensed operators, as the only effective means of eliminating the social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and damage.

- In 2006, nine out of ten emergency room fireworks injuries involved fireworks that Federal regulations permit consumers to use, according to the National Fire Protection Association. "Safe and sane" fireworks caused more injuries than illegal fireworks, especially to preschool children.

According to the American Pyrotechnics Association:

- Consumer Fireworks (formerly known as "Class C" Fireworks) - Also known as 1.4G Fireworks. These devices are most commonly sold at neighborhood stands during the Fourth of July season.
- Display Fireworks (formerly known as "Class B" Fireworks) - Also known as 1.3G Fireworks. These are the fireworks used in large community displays run by licensed professionals (pyrotechnicians). These devices are not intended for use by consumers.
- The legal limit of explosive material in a consumer (1.4G or Class C) firework is 50 mg (about the size of half an aspirin tablet). Any item containing more than 50 mg is illegal and should be avoided.

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