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**PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND
OHIO EYE CARE COALITION URGE OHIOANS TO BE SAFE THIS HOLIDAY
*Report Shows Statistically Significant Upward Trend in Fireworks Injuries***

Columbus – Prevent Blindness Ohio, the Ohio Eye Care Coalition, and State Fire Marshal Stephen K. Woltz teamed up at the Ohio Statehouse today to remind Ohioans to prevent injury this year by avoiding backyard fireworks. In 2005, 10,800 people were sent to the emergency room for treatment of firework-related injuries. There has been a statistically significant upward trend in fireworks injuries since 1996 when 7,300 people were treated for firework injuries.

“We want families to be aware of the dangers posed by fireworks,” said Sherill Williams, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “Sparklers and bottle rockets are the greatest cause of eye injuries requiring hospitalization. Sparklers burn at 1800 degrees Fahrenheit and accounted for almost half of the fireworks injuries in young children under age five.”

“Most fireworks are not legal to use in Ohio, and all of them are dangerous – even sparklers which legally can be sold and used in the state,” said State Fire Marshal Woltz. “I urge Ohioans to celebrate the Fourth of July holiday by attending public fireworks displays hosted by responsible organizations.”

Forty–five percent of those 10,800 injuries were to children 15 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.

Fireworks Safety Information:

- Protect yourself, your family, and your friends by avoiding fireworks.
- Firecrackers (1,700), bottle rockets (1,100), and sparklers (1,100) account for most 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.
- Backyard sparklers, often given to young children, burn at 1800 degrees — hot enough to melt gold.
- Sparklers accounted for almost half the injuries of children less than 5 years of age.
- Half of all fireworks injuries are to innocent bystanders.
- Attend only authorized public fireworks displays, but be aware that even professional displays can be dangerous.

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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.

Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio's leading volunteer-driven, nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. It serves 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](tel: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

The **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Annual Report** is available in full at <http://www.cpsc.gov/LIBRARY/2005fwreport.pdf>