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## **FIREWORKS CONTINUE TO BE DANGEROUS PART OF FOURTH OF JULY FESTIVITIES**

### ***National Non-Profit Offers Tips on Celebrating Independence Day Safely***

**CHICAGO** – Last year, approximately 6,400 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 every year has remained relatively steady. But, 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 36 percent. For children under the age of 5, a third 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.

“There are no such things as safe fireworks,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. “Although there seems to be a prevailing attitude that because an accident hasn’t happened before that fireworks aren’t dangerous, the statistics prove the opposite to be true.”

Prevent Blindness America 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. Today, only five states ban all consumer sales: Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island.

Interestingly, the CPSC also found that more than 100 people were injured from fireworks while attending public displays. Because all fireworks are unpredictable, even those used by licensed professionals can take unexpected flight paths or result in falling debris from the explosions. Adults and children attending authorized displays must use caution.

Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest eye health and safety organization, has developed fact sheets and brochures dedicated to fireworks safety education and offers them free to the public. Through its "Safe Summer Celebrations" brochure, the group offers fun, safe and fireworks-free ideas to celebrate Independence Day.

Some suggestions are:

- During the day, let the kids decorate t-shirts or hats with paint and glow-in-the-dark decals. Their creations will be ready by the time the sun goes down.
- Create your own noisemakers by using bicycle horns, whistles, bells, cymbals or pots and pans.
- Glo-sticks, glo-ropes and glo-jewelry can safely light the night for kids.

For a free copy of the Safe Summer Celebrations brochure or other fireworks safety information, including the Prevent Blindness America Fireworks Position Statement, please call 1-800-331-2020 or log onto [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, certified vision screenings, advocacy, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

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