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## PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA'S POSITION ON FIREWORKS

Prevent Blindness America supports the development and enforcement of restrictions on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks, except those used in authorized public displays by competent licensed operators, as the only effective means of eliminating the social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and damage. Prevent Blindness America promotes the following message:

- ☞ **Fireworks are extremely dangerous!**
- ☞ **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.**

### Recommendations

Prevent Blindness America supports model legislation that permits the public display of fireworks under controlled conditions, but **restricts** the importation, general sale and indiscriminate use of all other types of fireworks by adults and children. In order to eliminate the social and economic impact of fireworks accidents, Prevent Blindness America makes these recommendations:

- All state governments should adopt a **uniform** model law that would restrict the sale and use of fireworks. This would include laws restricting the use of consumer fireworks known as Class C or 1.4G, standards and codes for public fireworks displays, or other local and state laws.
- Federal agencies should enact and/or rigidly enforce regulations prohibiting the importation, Internet/mail order and

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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, advocacy, certified vision screening training, community and patient service programs and research.

interstate transportation of consumer fireworks.

- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission should place increased emphasis on the safe use of consumer fireworks by the public.
- Health care practitioners and local authorities should consistently report any fireworks-related injuries, property damages and deaths. Injuries and incidents can be reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission by calling 1-800-638-2772 or sending an e-mail to [info@cpsc.gov](mailto:info@cpsc.gov).
- All organizations and agencies concerned with the safety of the American public should intensify educational efforts to inform adults and children of the hazards associated with the use of all types of fireworks.

## General Facts About Fireworks

- Fireworks are classified in two categories: “Display” and “Consumer.” These categories were assigned by the U.S. Department of Transportation based on the United Nations’ Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods.
- “Display Fireworks” are devices used by park districts for public exhibition. In 1966, the federal government outlawed all display fireworks from interstate commerce for private use, and also began to regulate the manufacture and sale of devices sold to the public.

- “Consumer Fireworks” are any small device commonly bought over-the-counter. These are also referred to as Class C or 1.4G fireworks. Ground fireworks, such as firecrackers, have a maximum allowable charge of 50 milligrams of gunpowder. Aerial devices, such as bottle rockets, have a maximum allowable charge of 130 milligrams of gunpowder. Other types of consumer fireworks are sparklers, roman candles, fountains and snakes.

## Facts About Fireworks Injuries

- In 2003 approximately 9,300 fireworks injuries were treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms.
- A special survey estimated 6,800 injuries, directly involving fireworks, were treated in hospital emergency rooms during the one-month period surrounding the Fourth of July, 2003. That represents 73% of all fireworks injuries reported by the CPSC.

*Other information from the 2003 special survey revealed:*

- Out of an estimated 1,400 eye injuries, 36% were from unspecified devices, 21% from firecrackers, 14% from rockets, and 7% each from novelties, reloadables, roman candles, and public displays.
- Almost half (45%) of the injuries were to children under age 15.
- The parts of the body most often injured were the hands (26%), eyes (21%), legs (18%), head/face/ears (18%), trunk (12%), and arms/shoulders (7%).

Eye injuries included 400 burns, 500 contusions/lacerations, and 500 other diagnoses, including some vision loss.

- Six people were killed by fireworks in 2003—including a 2-year-old boy.

## Other Fireworks Facts

- According to the U.S. Eye Injury Registry, bottle rockets are the most frequent cause of serious eye injury requiring hospitalization.
- Sparklers, which many parents consider safe for children, can burn at temperatures up to 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. Sparklers were the leading cause of all injuries reported in the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission 2002 Report.
- Innocent bystanders are often at risk and rockets are often the cause. Rockets are unpredictable, and their flight path is erratic.
- From 1989 through 1993, home fires started by fireworks resulted in more than \$115.7 million in property damage.
- According to the National Fire Protection Association, in a single year, fireworks will cause thousands of fires and millions of dollars in direct property damage.
- A study of 53 serious ocular fireworks injuries reported from the Eye Injury Registry of Alabama revealed surgical intervention was required in 56.6% of the cases. Bottle rockets were responsible for all surgeries in which the injured eye had to be removed. Permanent residual vision loss occurred in all but four cases.

## Fireworks Control Laws

- Currently only seven states ban the use of all fireworks for private use; six states allow only sparklers and/or novelties; and 38 states, including the District of Columbia, allow consumer fireworks as approved by an enforcing authority or as specified by law.
- The enforcement of local, state and federal fireworks laws is extremely difficult. Illegal transportation of fireworks into states that have restrictive legislation is a common practice. Internet/mail order sales of fireworks and/or the ingredients to manufacture fireworks are really not regulated.

## References

Camesaca, F.I., M.D., et al., Ocular Fireworks Injuries: Tissue Damage, Surgical Therapy and Visual Outcome in 53 Cases, Birmingham, AL: U.S. Eye Registry, 1989.

Fireworks - Spectacular but Dangerous, Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, 1989.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), Product Summary Reports, 1998.

Green M.A., Race P.M., *2003 Fireworks Annual Report: Fireworks-related deaths, emergency department treated injuries, and enforcement activities during 2003*. Consumer Product Safety Commission, June, 2004. ([www.cpsc.gov/LIBRARY/2002fwreport.PDF](http://www.cpsc.gov/LIBRARY/2002fwreport.PDF)).

**Call the PBA Vision  
Health Resource Center  
at 1-800-331-2020.**

<b>Permits Consume Fireworks</b>	<b>Permits Sparkers/ Novelties</b>	<b>Bans All Consumer Fireworks</b>
Alabama Alaska		Arizona
Arkansas California Colorado Connecticut		Delaware
D.C. Florida		Georgia
Hawaii Idaho	Illinois	
Indiana	Iowa	
Kansas Kentucky Louisiana	Maine	Massachusetts
Maryland		
Michigan Minnesota Mississippi Missouri Montana Nebraska Nevada New Hampshire		New Jersey
New Mexico		New York
North Carolina North Dakota	Ohio	
Oklahoma Oregon	Pennsylvania	Rhode Island
South Carolina South Dakota Tennessee Texas Utah	Vermont	
Virginia Washington West Virginia Wisconsin Wyoming		

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