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Focus on Fire Safety—Fireworks

By the Numbers: Fireworks

- 8,700: Number of injuries caused by fireworks in 2012
- 1 out of 3 people injured by fireworks in 2012 were under 15 years of age
- 17,800: Number of fires caused by fireworks in 2011
- \$32 million: Amount of direct property loss caused by fireworks in 2011

Sources: Consumer Product Safety Commission and National Fire Protection Association

Every year in the United States, we celebrate the Fourth of July with community parades, picnics, barbecues, and fireworks—the things of which happy memories are made. But sadly, Independence Day also includes tragic events resulting from fireworks use. The safest way to enjoy them is through public displays conducted by professional pyro technicians hired by communities.

Who is at Most Risk?

In 2012, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 8,700 people for fireworks-related injuries. 60 percent of these injuries occurred between June and July. Of these:

- 74 percent were to males and 26 percent were to females.
- Children under 15 years old accounted for 29 percent of the estimated injuries.
- Children and young adults under 20 years old had 44 percent of the estimated injuries.
- An estimated 1,200 injuries were associated with firecrackers. Of these, an estimated 33 percent were associated with small firecrackers, 17 percent with illegal firecrackers, and 50 percent where the type of firecracker was not specified.
- An estimated 600 injuries were associated with sparklers and 600 with bottle rockets.

- The parts of the body most often injured were hands and fingers (41 percent), legs (13 percent), eyes (12 percent), and head, face, and ears (19 percent).
- 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.
- Most patients were treated at the emergency department and then released. An estimated 15 percent of patients were treated and transferred to another hospital or admitted to the hospital.

How and Why Do These Injuries Occur?

Did you know the tip of a sparkler burns at a temperature of about 2,000°F? This is hot enough to melt some metals and cause third degree burns.

- Availability—In spite of federal regulations and varying state prohibitions, many types of fireworks

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are still accessible to the public. Distributors often sell fireworks near state borders, where laws prohibiting sales on either side of the border may differ.

- Fireworks type—Among the various types of fireworks, some of which are sold legally in some states, bottle rockets can fly into peoples' faces and cause eye injuries; sparklers can ignite clothing (sparklers burn at about 2,000°F); and firecrackers can injure the hands or face if they explode at close range.
- Being too close—Injuries may result from being too close to fireworks when they explode; for example, when someone leans over to look more closely at a firework that has been ignited, or when a misguided bottle rocket hits a nearby person.
- Lack of physical coordination—Younger children often lack the physical coordination to handle fireworks safely.

- Curiosity—Children are often excited and curious around fireworks, which can increase their chances of being injured (for example, when they re-examine a firecracker dud that initially fails to ignite).
- Experimentation—Homemade fireworks (for example, ones made of the powder from several firecrackers) can lead to dangerous and unpredictable explosions.

What Can I Do?

The best way to protect your family is not to use any fireworks at home—period. Attend public fireworks displays and leave the lighting to the professionals.

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