

PUBLIC SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR FIREWORKS SAFETY

With warm weather and family events, the Fourth of July can be a fun time with great memories. But before your family celebrates this year, make sure everyone knows about fireworks safety.

If not handled properly, fireworks can cause burn and eye injuries in children and adults. There were 9,300 fireworks injuries treated in hospital emergency departments in 2003, and 6 deaths linked to fireworks.

The best thing you can do to protect your child is not to use any fireworks at home - period. Attend public fireworks displays, and leave the lighting to the professionals.

Lighting fireworks at home isn't even legal in many areas, so if you still want to use them, be sure to check with your local police department first. If they're legal where you live, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Do not allow young children to play with fireworks under any circumstances. Sparklers considered by many the ideal "safe" firework for the young, burn at very high temperatures and can easily ignite clothing. Children cannot understand the danger involved and cannot act appropriately in case of emergency.
- Older children should only be permitted to use fireworks under close adult supervision. Do not allow any running or horseplay.
- Light fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from houses, dry leaves or grass and flammable materials.
- Keep a bucket of water nearby for emergencies and for pouring on fireworks that don't go off.

- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Douse and soak them with water and throw them away.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Never ignite fireworks in a container, especially a glass or metal container.
- Keep unused fireworks away from firing areas.
- Store fireworks in a dry, cool place. Check instructions for special storage directions.
- Observe local laws.
- Never have any portion of your body directly over a firework while lighting.
- Don't experiment with homemade fireworks.

PARENTS SHOULD SUPERVISE THE ORDERING AND USE OF MAILORDER "MAKE YOUR OWN" FIREWORK KITS.

If your child is injured by fireworks, immediately go to a doctor or hospital. If an eye injury occurs, don't allow your child to touch or rub it, as this may cause even more damage. Also, don't flush the eye out with water or attempt to put any ointment on it. Instead, cut out the bottom of a paper cup, place it around the eye, and immediately seek medical attention - your child's eyesight may depend on it. If it's a burn, remove clothing from the burned area and run cool, not cold, water over the burn (do not use ice). Call your child's doctor immediately.

Fireworks are meant to be enjoyed, but you'll enjoy them much more knowing your family is safe. Take extra precautions this Fourth of July and your holiday will be a blast!