



Celebrate safely on Independence Day; especially when using fireworks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Many Americans are planning to use fireworks to display their patriotism on the Fourth of July in the wake of the events of Sept. 11. The Alabama Department of Public Health joins the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission in urging consumers to celebrate Independence Day safely by not purchasing illegal fireworks and by following safety recommendations on the use of legal fireworks.

"We all want to spend our Fourth of July with family and friends, not in the emergency room," Acting CPSC Chairman Thomas Moore said. "Never buy illegal fireworks such as M-80s or purchase professional, display fireworks, sometimes sold illegally to consumers. Also, too many people are injured by firecrackers placed in metal or glass containers or thrown at another person."

Dr. Jim McVay, director of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease, state health department, warned that fireworks frequently cause burns and eye injuries. He cautioned, "Never give fireworks, even sparklers, to young children. Sparklers burn at temperatures of 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is at a community-sanctioned, licensed event."

An analysis prepared by CPSC staff reveals that in 2001, hospital emergency rooms treated about 9,500 people for fireworks-related injuries. The number of injuries has decreased significantly from the highs of 1992-94, when injuries averaged 12,500 a year. From 1994 to 2001, the number of fireworks injuries fell by one-fourth, from 12,500 to 9,500.

As part of its fireworks enforcement program, CPSC prevents millions of hazardous fireworks from reaching consumers. Fireworks that are banned and often seized under the

program include illegal mail order kits containing chemical mixtures that can explode unexpectedly and violently. M-80s, cherry bombs and quarter sticks are so highly explosive that they have been banned by federal law since 1966. Working with the U.S. Customs Service since 1988, CPSC has seized or detained more than 400 million hazardous fireworks at docks across the country.

Alabama law allows only consumer fireworks, formerly known as class C fireworks. Some municipalities (including Montgomery) outlaw fireworks altogether.

If consumer fireworks are legal where you live and you decide to set them off on your own, be sure to follow these important safety tips:

- Read and follow all warnings and instructions.

- A responsible adult should closely supervise all fireworks activities.
- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks. Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from the house, dry leaves, and flammable materials.
- Light one item at a time, then move back quickly.
- Never try to relight fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Never carry fireworks in a pocket or shoot them in metal or glass containers.
- Keep a bucket of water or a hose handy in case of a malfunction or fire.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's Web site at www.cpsc.gov/talk.html. Consumers can obtain news releases and recall information at CPSC's Web site at www.cpsc.gov.

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