



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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### Follow safety guidelines when handling fireworks

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fireworks are a traditional part of the celebration of Independence Day, July 4. Although legal consumer fireworks that comply with the Consumer Product Safety Commission regulations can be relatively safe, all fireworks are hazardous and can cause injury.

In 2005, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 10,800 people for fireworks-related injuries. Of these injuries 48 percent were to extremities while 44 percent were to the head. Fifty-four percent of the fireworks injuries were burns, while 29 percent were contusions and lacerations. Nearly half the people injured by fireworks were under the age of 15.

“We want to encourage everyone to be safe when using legal fireworks on July 4. We want to particularly stress to parents to be watchful of their children and help prevent unnecessary harm,” said Samille Jackson, health educator with the Injury Prevention Division at the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Those most frequently injured by fireworks are children between the ages of 10 and 14 years old. Males accounted for two-thirds (69 percent) of fireworks injuries. In 2005, sparklers, fountains and novelties alone accounted for one-fourth (26 percent) of emergency-room fireworks injuries, including most injuries to pre-school children (ages 4 and under).

Make sure there are no ordinances prohibiting fireworks in the area where you will be using them and that there are no fireworks restrictions posed because of this year's drought.

Legal fireworks can pose as much danger as illegal fireworks if not used correctly. Of the injuries occurring in 2005, 95 percent of emergency room fireworks injuries involved fireworks that federal regulations permit consumers to use. The remaining 5 percent were illegal firecrackers, homemade or altered devices, and public display fireworks. Fireworks-related injuries in 2005 were most commonly associated with small firecrackers (31 percent), fireworks rockets (21 percent) and sparklers (20 percent).

#### Safety Tips

The best way to prevent fireworks-related injuries is to leave fireworks displays to the trained professionals. But, for those who participate, the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission and the National Council on Fireworks Safety have issued these tips.

- Do not let children under 14 years of age use fireworks.
- Individuals under age 18 should be supervised.
- Only buy from reliable fireworks sellers; read and follow all the warnings and instructions.
- Use fireworks outdoors only; keep them away from houses and flammable materials.
- Have a bucket of water nearby.
- Do NOT try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak them in water and throw them away.
- Be sure other people stand a safe distance away before lighting fireworks.
- Never ignite fireworks in a container – especially a glass or metal.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place according to their specific storage instructions.
- Never experiment or attempt to make your own fireworks.
- Do not wear loose clothing near a fire or while using fireworks.
- Rockets should be launched from a rocket launcher, not a bottle.
- Sparklers need to be handled carefully, too. They burn at more than 1,000 degrees F. Light them one at a time at arm's length. Always gloves while holding a sparkler and never give one to a child under 5 years of age.
- Educate children (of all ages) about the dangers of fireworks and teach them to practice safety at all times.

For more information contact the State Fire Marshal's office at 334-241-4166 or visit [www.aldoi.gov](http://www.aldoi.gov).

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