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All Fireworks Pose a Threat to Safety

Did you know that during the month surrounding the Fourth of July, 200 people are treated every day in hospital emergency rooms with injuries caused by fireworks? In fact, fireworks were involved in approximately 9,600 injuries that were treated in U.S hospital emergency rooms in 2012. As the Fourth of July approaches, it is extremely important to remember the possible risks when planning for summer fun. For these reasons, the Central Connecticut Health District is reminding adults and children about the dangers of fireworks.

Every year, the fourth of July is celebrated and among the barbeques, parades and pie, there are serious injuries and health hazards that come with fireworks. According to the National Council on Fireworks Safety (NCFS), these accidents could be avoided by taking basic safety steps, including the following:

- Parents and caretakers should always watch teens closely if they are handling fireworks.
- Parents should not allow young children to use or handle fireworks.
- Fireworks should only be used outdoors.
- Always have water ready if you are shooting fireworks.
- Know your fireworks and how they ignite. Read the caution label before igniting.
- Always remember that alcohol and fireworks DO NOT mix
- Wear safety glasses whenever using fireworks.
- Never relight a “dud” firework. Wait 20 minutes then soak it in a bucket of water.
- Avoid using homemade fireworks or illegal explosives; they can kill you!
- Report illegal explosives, like M-80s and quarter sticks, to the fire or police department

While most people think of being burned, handling fireworks can actually do a lot more damage to the eyes than originally thought. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), three of five (61%) fireworks injuries in 2011 were to extremities – hand or finger (46%), leg (11%), and arm, shoulder, or wrist (4%). Most of the rest (34% of total) were to parts of the head, including the eye (17% of total).

Large fireworks displays are not the only danger during the summer but that also includes sparklers. Sparklers are often seen as the “safe” fireworks, but that is hardly the case. Sparklers can burn upwards of 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit, which is hotter than the temperature of melting glass.

The following tips have been recommended specifically for sparkler use:

- Always remain standing while using sparklers.
- Never hold a child in your arms while using sparklers.
- Never hold or light more than one sparkler at a time.
- Never throw sparklers.
- Sparkler wire and stick remain hot long after the flame has gone out, so be sure to drop sparklers in a bucket of water after usage.
- Teach children not to wave sparklers or run while holding sparklers.

According to the NFPA, an estimated 17,800 reported fires were started by fireworks in 2011. These fires resulted in an estimated 40 civilian injuries and \$32 million in direct property damage, with no reported fire deaths. To

maximize both safety and enjoyment this Fourth of July, plan to attend one of the local fireworks displays offered by the surrounding communities. As the CPSC advises, “leave fireworks to the professionals!”

For more information, contact Prevent Blindness America at www.preventblindness.org or by contacting the US Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.cpsc.gov. Any further questions about fireworks safety or any other public health issue may be directed to the Central Connecticut Health District at (860)721-2822 or by visiting www.ccthd.org.