

FIREWORKS, FLAMES AND SAFETY

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U.S. Navy photo by
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Fourth of July celebrations often include festive picnics and stunning fireworks, but these dazzling displays of freedom are causing a growing number of injuries and deaths. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reported nine people died in incidents involving fireworks while 11,500 were injured in 2022. Additionally, three-quarters of the total estimated fireworks related injuries occurred between June 18 and July 18, the peak time for sparklers and firecrackers outside of Dec. 31 through Jan. 2 celebrations. The age group with the most injuries were young adults ages 20 to 24. About 1,500 emergency department visits involved firecracker injuries and another 1,100 involved sparklers. About one-third of injuries were burns to the hands, fingers, head, face and ears, the CPSC reported.

In anticipation of the upcoming Independence Day celebration, I would like to offer the following tips:

- Always use fireworks outside and have a bucket of water or hose nearby in case of accidents.
- Ditch faulty fireworks. Sometimes fireworks do not go off or work as advertised. Never try to relight or approach a failed firework. Let these "duds" sit for 5 to 10 minutes and then put them in a bucket of water.
- Always have an adult supervise fireworks activities. This tip is especially important with sparklers.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Never place any part of your body directly over a firework device when lighting the fuse. Back up to a safe distance immediately after lighting fireworks.
- Avoid buying fireworks that are packaged in plain brown paper. This is often a sign that the fireworks were made for professional displays and could be dangerous to a novice.
- Make sure fireworks are legal to purchase and shoot in your area.
- Never light fireworks after drinking alcohol.
- Flammable liquids, such as gasoline, should be kept at a safe distance.
- Instead of buying fireworks, encourage your family and friends to attend public fireworks displays, which are typically monitored for safety by a local fire department.

In the event of an accidental burn, start cooling the burn immediately under cool, clean running water for at least 3 to 5 minutes, place a clean dry towel on the wound, make the person as comfortable as possible, lie them down and elevate their legs. Never touch the burn directly. Never use lotions, ointments or creams. Never use adhesive dressings. Never break or pop blisters.

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Seek medical attention if needed. If anything is lodged in the eye, cover both eyes and seek medical attention. If clothing is on fire, ensure victims stop, drop and roll -- don't hop, plop or run into a lake or other body of dirty water; this may lead to infection. Know the basics of fireworks safety. That way, nothing will get in the way of celebrating and you and your guests can remain safe. Don't let an ooh or ahh turn into an ow or oh no.