

Safety Alert Bulletin

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CPSC Warns of Deadly Dangers When Consumers Use Illegal Fireworks

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Between 2000 and 2006, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has reports of 49 fireworks-related consumer deaths, the CPSC announced today on the Washington Mall, joined by the U.S. Fire Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). More than half of these incidents involved illegal fireworks.

“While many Americans will enjoy the safe and legal use of fireworks,” said Acting CPSC Chairman Nancy Nord, “there will be those who will be treated in hospital emergency rooms as a result of using illegal fireworks, misusing fireworks, or due to a firework that has malfunctioned.”

On average there are about seven firework-related deaths each year. The CPSC is aware of 11 deaths associated with fireworks in 2006.

CPSC’s staff estimates that there were 9,200 emergency room-treated injuries associated with all fireworks in 2006. Most of these injuries, 6,400, occurred during the one month period surrounding the July 4th holiday.

For those consumers who choose to use fireworks, CPSC encourages them to do so safely and legally. The federal government is committed to stopping the manufacture and sale of illegal fireworks and the diversion of professional fireworks to consumers. These explosives can be deadly if used by consumers.

As a part of its fireworks enforcement program, CPSC actively works with ATF. Through undercover buys, online purchases, inspections and investigations, CPSC and ATF are tracking down and closing illegal roadside stands, warehouses and retail stores that sell professional grade explosives to consumers, and manufacturers of dangerous fireworks devices. CPSC also works with the U.S. Fire Administration to reduce deaths and injuries from fire-related hazards, including fireworks.

Since 1988, CPSC and Customs and Border Protection have seized or detained more than 462 million hazardous fireworks at docks across the country. The investigative work conducted by CPSC and ATF has led to dozens of successful prosecutions by the Justice Department’s Office of Consumer Litigation and U.S. Attorney’s offices across the country.

CPSC recommends following these fireworks safety tips:

- * Never allow young children to play with fireworks.
- * Make sure fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them. Avoid buying fireworks that come in brown paper packaging, as this is often a sign that the fireworks were made for professional shows and could pose a danger to consumers.
- * Adults should always supervise fireworks activities. Parents often don't realize that sparklers have caused more injuries to children under age five than any other type of firework. Sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees - hot enough to melt some metals.
- * Never have any portion of your body directly over a firework device when lighting the fuse. Move back a safe distance immediately after lighting.
- * Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- * Douse and soak with water and throw them away.
- * Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- * Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
- * Light one item at a time, then move back quickly.
- * Never carry fireworks in a pocket or shoot them off in metal or glass containers.

To see this press release on CPSC's web site, please go to:

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml07/07223.html>



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