



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives

Office of the Director

Washington, DC 20226

May 28, 2008

Open Letter to All Fireworks Licensees and Permittees:

As spring arrives and summer nears, families' thoughts turn towards outdoor activities such as picnics, festivals, and various celebrations. No celebrations bring greater fanfare than those held on the Fourth of July, America's Independence Day. And without fireworks, America's Independence Day would seem empty. You, as fireworks industry members, should be proud of your contributions to this and other events.

Yet sadly for some families, this time of year is a time for remembering tragic events – events that often result from the illegal manufacture, importation, or distribution of powerful fireworks not made for consumer use. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), together with our Federal, State, and local law enforcement or regulatory partners, is committed to preventing these tragedies and to punishing those who are responsible. Fireworks industry members play an important role in this effort. We applaud your contribution to firework safety.

Now we in the law enforcement community are asking you to do even more. If you know or suspect someone is illegally trafficking in overloaded or otherwise unlawful or dangerous fireworks devices, please contact ATF through your local field office or through our hotline at 1-888-283-2662 (1-888-ATF-BOMB). Action by law enforcement is important not only for public safety, but also to prevent criminal elements from tainting the legitimate business activities of fireworks industry members.

This year, one of your industry groups, the American Pyrotechnic Association, made a proposal that we anticipate will make fireworks recordkeeping more manageable and enhance our ability to trace and track fireworks. The proposed process should improve public safety and reduce the number of illegal transactions in display fireworks. ATF is committed to issuing variances to some of the prescribed recordkeeping requirements, if proprietors can meet the proposed guidelines for improved tracking, tracing, and accountability of display fireworks.

In order to ensure that all fireworks industry members know of the variance guidelines, our Explosives Industry Programs Branch (EIPB) will be posting the procedures and requirements to ATF's website (www.atf.gov). Please contact your local ATF field office or EIPB (eipb@atf.gov) at 202-648-7120 for more information.

Once again, thank you for your diligence and hard work, and have a happy and safe summer.

Michael J. Sullivan
Acting Director