



Fireworks

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The American traditions of parades, cookouts, and fireworks help us celebrate the summer season, especially our nation's birthday on the Fourth of July. However, fireworks can turn a joyful celebration into a painful memory when children and adults are injured while using fireworks. Although legal consumer fireworks that comply with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regulations can be relatively safe, all fireworks are hazardous and can cause injury. Fireworks are classified as hazardous substances under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act. Some fireworks, such as illegal firecracker type devices (M-80's, quarter sticks) and professional display fireworks, should never be used or handled by consumers due to serious injuries and deaths that can and do occur.

The following are examples of injuries from legal and illegal fireworks:

A 32-year-old man was launching aerial fireworks from a platform on a driveway. The first round of the ten shot device went into the air, but then the device tipped over pointing the remaining fireworks at the people who were watching the display. The remaining fireworks were launched into the crowd. There were six people burned ranging in age from 4 to 32 years old.

A 15-year-old male lit an M-80 inside his house and it exploded in his hand. The tips of two of his fingers were blown off.

A 31-year-old man and his 32-year-old brother were involved in an explosion in an apartment complex. The victims were illegally manufacturing fireworks when the explosion occurred. The victims were reported to have purchased pyrotechnic components over the internet. One victim died six days after being admitted to the hospital and the other brother died two weeks after the incident.

To help prevent incidents like these, the federal government, under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, prohibits the sale of the most dangerous types of fireworks to consumers. These banned fireworks include large reloadable mortar shells, cherry bombs, aerial bombs, M-80 salutes and larger firecrackers containing more than two grains of powder. Also banned are mail-order kits designed to build these fireworks.

In a regulation that went into effect December 6, 1976, the CPSC lowered the permissible charge in firecrackers to no more than 50 milligrams of powder. In addition, these amended regulations provide performance specifications for fireworks other than firecrackers intended for consumer use, including a requirement that fuses burn at least 3 seconds, but no longer than 9 seconds. All fireworks must carry a warning label describing necessary safety precautions and instructions for safe use.

The Commission has issued a performance requirement to reduce the risk of potentially dangerous tip-over of large multiple tube mine and shell devices. Tip-over of these devices has resulted in two fatalities.

CPSC estimates that in 2007 about 9,800 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with fireworks. More than half the injuries were burns and most of the injuries involved the hands, eyes, and legs. Children 10 to 14 years old had the highest per capita injury rate among all age groups. Fireworks should be used only with extreme caution. Older children should be closely supervised, and younger children should not be allowed to play with fireworks, including sparklers.

Before using fireworks, make sure they are permitted in your state or local area. Many states and local governments prohibit or limit consumer fireworks, formerly known as class C fireworks, which are common fireworks, and firecrackers sold for consumer use. Consumer fireworks include shells and mortars, multiple tube devices, Roman Candles, rockets, sparklers, firecrackers with no more than 50 milligrams of powder and novelty items such as snakes, airplanes, ground spinners, helicopters, fountains, and party poppers.

To help consumers use fireworks more safely, the CPSC offers these recommendations:

--Do not allow young children to play with fireworks under any circumstances. Sparklers, considered by many the ideal "safe" firework for the young, burn at very high temperatures and can easily ignite clothing. Children cannot understand the danger involved and cannot act appropriately in case of emergency.

--Older children should only be permitted to use fireworks under close adult supervision. Do not allow any running or horseplay.

-- Light fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from houses, dry leaves or grass and flammable materials.

-- Keep a bucket of water nearby for emergencies and for pouring on fireworks that don't go off.

-- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Douse and soak them with water and throw them away.

-- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.

-- Never ignite fireworks in a container, especially a glass or metal container.

-- Keep unused fireworks away from firing areas.

-- Store fireworks in a dry, cool place. Check instructions for special storage directions.

-- Observe local laws.

-- Never have any portion of your body directly over a firework while lighting.

-- Don't experiment with homemade fireworks.

PARENTS SHOULD SUPERVISE THE ORDERING AND USE OF MAIL-ORDER "MAKE YOUR OWN" FIREWORK KITS AND COMPONENTS. MAIL-ORDER KITS AND COMPONENTS DESIGNED TO BUILD BANNED FIREWORKS ARE PROHIBITED.

The following is a summary of state regulations as of June 1, 2008.

I. STATES THAT ALLOW SOME OR ALL TYPES OF CONSUMER FIREWORKS (formerly known as class C fireworks), APPROVED BY ENFORCING AUTHORITY, OR AS SPECIFIED IN LAW (39 states, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico):

Alabama	Montana
Alaska	Nebraska
Arkansas	New Hampshire
California	New Mexico
Colorado	Nevada
Connecticut	North Carolina
Florida	North Dakota
Georgia	Oklahoma
Hawaii	Oregon
Idaho	Pennsylvania
Indiana	South Carolina
Kansas	South Dakota
Kentucky	Tennessee
Louisiana	Texas
Maryland	Utah
Michigan	Virginia
Minnesota	Washington
Mississippi	West Virginia
Missouri	Wisconsin
	Wyoming

(The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, in addition to the above states enforce the federal regulations and applicable state restrictions.)

II. STATES THAT ALLOW ONLY SPARKLERS AND/OR OTHER NOVELTIES

(total of 5 states):

Illinois	Ohio
Iowa	Vermont
Maine	

III. STATES THAT ALLOW ONLY NOVELTY FIREWORKS (total of 1 state):

Arizona

IV. STATES THAT BAN ALL CONSUMER FIREWORKS (including those which are allowed by CPSC regulations) - (total of 5 states):

Delaware	New York
Massachusetts	Rhode Island
New Jersey	

To report a dangerous product or a product related injury call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270. Consumers can obtain releases and recall information at CPSC's web site at www.cpsc.gov. Consumers can report product hazards to info@cpsc.gov.

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