

READY ...OR NOT?



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER

4905 Ruf Ave. Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363
Comm. (334) 255-3770 Fax (334) 255-2609
<https://safety.army.mil>

Fireworks fun shouldn't hurt

Art Powell
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center
Fort Rucker, Alabama

Fireworks and the Fourth of July are as much a part of the mid-summer holiday as baseball and the beach, but for some people they represent an accident with injury or worse.

In the United States, the number of deaths and injuries from fireworks is increasing. Four deaths were reported in 2011, six in 2012 and eight in 2013, the last year for which figures are available from the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Fireworks were involved in an estimated 11,400 injuries treated in hospital emergency departments during calendar year 2013.

"These deaths in 2011-13 are very unfortunate and could have been avoided," said Ralph Apel, National Council on Fireworks Safety. "Our advice for consumers is to know your fireworks before you light them by reading the cautionary statements on each device, follow all safety tips and do not consume alcohol if you are going to use consumer fireworks. Do not attempt to alter or manufacture fireworks or illegal explosives, and do not use professional 1.3G fireworks."

Consuming alcohol while shooting fireworks is a dangerous combination that Army safety officials recognize.

"The safest way to enjoy fireworks is as a spectator watching a show run by professionals," said Lt. Col. Phillip Jenison, director, Ground Directorate, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. "If you want to shoot your own fireworks, never consume alcohol before or while you are handling fireworks."

"It's a dangerous and potentially deadly combination. Just like drinking and driving, alcohol and fireworks don't mix."

A review of fireworks fatalities during 2013 paints a picture of how indiscipline plays a role in these accidents. Four people died in structure fires ignited by fireworks powder; an adult died of massive head trauma after a professional device exploded in his face; a man was killed after an altered mortar shell exploded out of the launching tube he was holding at chest level; another man was fatally injured when an explosion occurred while he was making illegal fireworks; and a final victim died of an explosive injury to his head when he leaned over to light a firework with a cigarette in his mouth.

To reduce the chances of being one of the estimated 240 people on average who visit emergency rooms daily during the month around July 4th, follow these safety tips from the CPSC:

- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks. Avoid buying fireworks packaged in brown paper, which generally means they were produced for professional displays and pose a danger to consumers.
- Always have an adult supervise fireworks activities. Even sparklers burn at about 2,000 degrees F — hot enough to melt some metals — and injure numerous children every year.
- Do not place any part of your body directly over a fireworks device when lighting the fuse, and back up a safe distance immediately after lighting fireworks. Ignite only one device at a time.
- Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not ignited fully.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Keep a bucket of water or garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap. Douse spent devices with water before discarding.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket or shoot them from metal or glass containers.
- Ensure fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them.

Fireworks should be fun, so don't get hurt!

For more information on off-duty safety, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.