

Fireworks Position Statement

Prevent Blindness America supports the development and enforcement of bans on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks and sparklers, except those used in authorized public displays by competent licensed operators, as the only effective means of eliminating the social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and damage.

Note: Sparklers include two classifications, based upon the type of combustible used: Certain sparklers are classified as 1.4G fireworks (often called “consumer fireworks”), while others are classified as “novelties.” Both types of sparklers burn at 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. For the purposes of this paper, the term “sparklers” refers collectively to sparklers in both classifications.

Prevent Blindness America promotes the following message:

- > Fireworks are extremely dangerous!
- > Do not purchase, use or store fireworks or sparklers of any type.
- > Protect yourself, your family and your friends by avoiding fireworks and sparklers.
- > Attend only authorized public fireworks displays conducted by licensed operators, but be aware that even professional displays can be dangerous.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prevent Blindness America supports model legislation that permits the public display of fireworks under controlled conditions by trained and licensed personnel, but bans the importation, general sale and indiscriminate use of all other types of fireworks by adults and children including “consumer” fireworks and sparklers. In order to eliminate the health and economic impact of fireworks accidents, Prevent Blindness America makes these recommendations:

- > All state governments should adopt a uniform model law that would restrict the sale and use of fireworks. This would include laws banning the use of consumer fireworks known as Class C or 1.4G and all types of sparklers, and establishing standards and codes for public fireworks displays.
- > Federal agencies should enact and/or rigidly enforce regulations prohibiting the importation, Internet/mail order and interstate transportation of consumer fireworks and sparklers.



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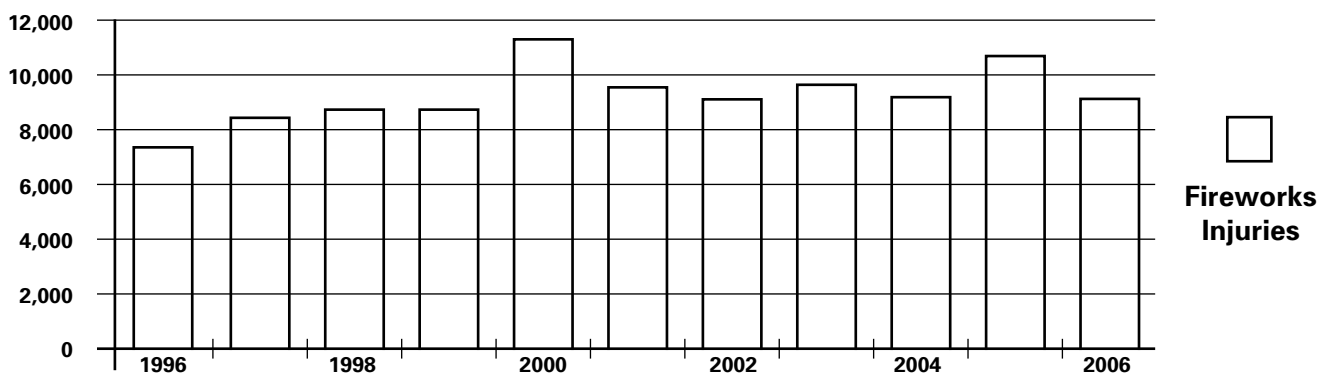
- > The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission should work to ban the use of consumer fireworks and sparklers by the public.
- > Healthcare practitioners and local authorities should consistently report any fireworks or sparkler-related injuries, property damages and deaths. Injuries and incidents can be reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission by calling 1-800-638-2772 or sending an e-mail to info@cpsc.gov.
- > All organizations and agencies concerned with the safety of the American public should intensify educational efforts to inform adults and children of the hazards associated with the use of all types of fireworks and sparklers.

GENERAL FACTS ABOUT FIREWORKS

- > Fireworks are classified into two categories: "Display" and "Consumer." These categories were assigned by the U.S. Department of Transportation based on the United Nations' Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods.
- > "Display Fireworks" are devices used by park districts for public exhibition. In 1966, the federal government outlawed all display fireworks from interstate commerce for private use, and also began to regulate the manufacture and sale of devices sold to the public
- > "Consumer Fireworks" are any small device commonly bought over-the-counter. These are also referred to as Class C or 1.4G fireworks.
 - Ground fireworks, such as firecrackers, have a maximum allowable charge of 50 milligrams of gunpowder.
 - Aerial devices, such as bottle rockets, have a maximum allowable charge of 130 milligrams of gunpowder.
 - Other types of consumer fireworks are sparklers, roman candles, fountains and snakes.

FACTS ABOUT FIREWORKS INJURIES

- > Fireworks were involved in an estimated 9,200 injuries treated in U. S. hospital emergency departments during calendar year 2006, 10,800 injuries during 2005 and 9,600 in 2004.



- > The Consumer Product Safety Commission study of 6,400 fireworks-related injuries occurring from June 16, 2006 to July 16, 2006 revealed:
 - More than three times as many males were injured as females.
 - Injuries to children were a major component of total fireworks-related injuries with children under 15 accounting for 36 percent of the estimated injuries.
 - Among different types of fireworks, firecrackers were associated with the greatest number of estimated injuries at 1,300. There were 1,000 sparkler injuries and 800 rocket injuries.
 - Sparklers accounted for one-third of the injuries to children less than 5 years of age.
 - The parts of the body most often injured were hands (estimated 2,300 injuries), eyes (1,500 injuries) and the head, face and ear (1,400 injuries).
- > According to the U.S. Eye Injury Registry, bottle rockets are the most frequent cause of serious eye injury requiring hospitalization.
- > Innocent bystanders are often at risk and rockets are often the cause. Rockets are unpredictable, and their flight path is erratic.
- > According to the National Fire Protection Association, in a single year, fireworks will cause thousands of fires and millions of dollars in direct property damage. In 2003, an estimated 2,300 reported structure or vehicle fires were started by fireworks. These fires resulted in 5 civilian deaths, 60 civilian injuries and \$29 million in direct property damage.
- > A study of 53 serious ocular fireworks injuries reported from the Eye Injury Registry of Alabama revealed surgical intervention was required in 56.6% of the cases. Bottle rockets were responsible for all surgeries in which the injured eye had to be removed. Permanent residual vision loss occurred in all but four cases.

FIREWORKS CONTROL LAWS

- > Currently only five states ban the use of all fireworks for private use (Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island); six states allow only sparklers and/or novelties; and 39 states and the District of Columbia allow consumer fireworks as approved by an enforcing authority or as specified by law.
- > The enforcement of local, state and federal fireworks laws is extremely difficult. Illegal transportation of fireworks into states that have restrictive legislation is a common practice. Internet/mail order sales of fireworks and/or the ingredients to manufacture fireworks are really not regulated.

References

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