



**Department
of Commerce**

Division of State Fire Marshal



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NEW FIREWORKS INJURY DATA RELEASED TODAY

HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS JOIN TO EDUCATE OHIOANS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF BACKYARD FIREWORKS

COLUMBUS, OH – Prevent Blindness Ohio, Ohio Department of Commerce’s Division of State Fire Marshal, the Ohio Eye Care Coalition, and the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital joined forces at the Ohio Statehouse today to educate Ohioans about the dangers of backyard fireworks. In 2009, 8,800 people were treated in emergency departments for firework-related injuries. An estimated 5,900 fireworks-related injuries, or 67 percent of people treated, occurred during the one-month period surrounding the Fourth of July Holiday.

Injuries to children under the age of 15 accounted for 39 percent of the estimated firework-related injuries according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s 2009 Annual Fireworks Report released today. Children and young adults under 20 years old had 54 percent of the estimated injuries. Children under the age of five experienced an estimated 200 injuries from sparklers, which was half of the total injuries for that age group. The part of the body most often injured were hands and fingers (estimated 1,900 injuries), eyes (1,600), and the head, face, and ears (900).

“Prevent Blindness Ohio supports a total BAN on backyard fireworks, including sparklers, which are widely available at grocery and department stores,” said Jenny Camper, Chair of the Board of Directors of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “An estimated 1,000 serious injuries occurred last year due to the use of sparklers and 200 of those injuries were to children under the age of five,” added Camper.

There are three types of fireworks in Ohio, all of which are hazardous: Trick and novelty items such as sparklers and snakes that can be legally sold and used by anyone; exhibitor fireworks which require a license to sell, purchase and use; and consumer class fireworks such as bottle rockets and roman candles, which require a license to sell. Consumer fireworks can be purchased by anyone over the age of 18, but must be removed from the state within a certain timeframe and cannot be legally discharged in Ohio. A list of frequently asked questions on fireworks is available in the press room at www.com.state.oh.us.

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"Every legally available backyard firework has been associated with serious injury and death," said Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, Director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, and an associate professor of pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. "Although some people mistakenly believe that backyard fireworks are safe if only adults handle them, our research shows that one-quarter of fireworks-related injuries to children occur to bystanders. These children were not using the fireworks themselves and yet they were still injured. This tells us that children are at risk of injury by simply being in the vicinity of backyard fireworks use." added Dr. Smith.

"Most fireworks are not legal to use in Ohio, and all of them are inherently dangerous – even sparklers and smoke bombs which legally can be sold and used in the state," said Interim State Fire Marshal Donald Cooper. "The best way for Ohioans to prevent fireworks injuries is to attend a licensed, professional fireworks exhibition."

Fireworks Safety Facts:

- In 2009, 8,800 people were treated in emergency departments for firework-related injuries; two were associated deaths.
- 5,900 of the injuries (67 percent) occurred during a one-month period around the Fourth of July Holiday.
- Firecrackers (1,200), sparklers (1,000) and rockets (300) accounted for the most injuries last year.
- The part of the body most often injured were hands and fingers (estimated 1,900 injuries), eyes (1,600), and the head, face and ears (900).
- Bottle rockets, firecrackers, sparklers and roman candles account for most eye injuries.
- Backyard sparklers, often given to young children, burn at 1800 degrees—hot enough to melt gold.
- Sparklers accounted for 200 injuries to children under five years old. This is half of estimated injuries in that age group.
- The major causes of injuries are due to delayed or early fireworks explosions, errant flight paths of rockets, debris from aerial fireworks, and mishandling of sparklers.
- In 2009, fireworks sparked 108 fires in Ohio causing \$638,000 in damages.

Prevent Blindness Ohio has these tips to help prevent fireworks-related injuries:

- Do not purchase, use or store fireworks of any type.
- Be aware that even sparklers are dangerous and cause one half of fireworks injuries in children five years old and younger.
- Protect yourself, your family and your friends by avoiding fireworks.
- Attend only authorized public fireworks displays conducted by licensed operators, but be aware that even professional displays can be dangerous.
- Support policies that ban the importation, general sale and indiscriminate usage of fireworks by children and adults.

The Ohio Eye Care Coalition offers the following guidance in responding to eye injuries:

- Do not delay medical attention, even for seemingly mild injuries. "Mild" injuries can worsen and end in vision loss or even blindness that might not have occurred had a doctor provided treatment early on.
- Do not rub the eye nor attempt to rinse out the eye.
- Avoid giving aspirin or ibuprofen to try to reduce the pain. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs thin the blood and might increase bleeding. Acetaminophen is the over-the-counter drug of choice.
- Do not apply ointment or any medication. It is probably not sterile. Also, ointments make the eye area slippery, which could slow the doctor's examination at a time when every second counts.

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*The **Ohio Eye Care Coalition (OECC)** is a group of organizations that work together to provide a forum for discussion and action on vision care policies and programs geared to enhancing the eye health and safety status for all Ohioans. Members include Ohio Ophthalmological Society, Ohio Optometric Association, Opticians Association of Ohio and Prevent Blindness Ohio. Facilitation is provided by The Ohio Department of Health.*

Ohio Department of Commerce: *A list of frequently asked questions on fireworks is available in the press room at www.com.ohio.gov/fire.*

*The **Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP)** works globally to reduce injury-related pediatric death and disabilities. With innovative research at its core, CIRP works to continually improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, biomechanics, prevention, acute treatment and rehabilitation of injuries. CIRP serves as a pioneer by translating cutting edge injury research into education, advocacy and advances in clinical care. For related injury prevention materials or to learn more about the Center for Injury Research and Policy go to <http://www.injurycenter.org>. While visiting our website, sign up for the RSS feed in the What's New section of our media center to receive e-mail updates of our latest news.*

***Prevent Blindness Ohio**, founded in 1957, is Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to its mission to prevent blindness and preserve sight. We serve all 88 Ohio counties, providing direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educating millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country's second-oldest national voluntary health organization. For more information or to make a contribution, visit www.pbOhio.org or call 800-301-2020.*

The **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Annual Report** is available in full at:
<http://www.cpsc.gov/LIBRARY/2009fwreport.pdf>

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