

Fireworks Safety:

Make Sure Your Child Is Not Burned by the Rocket's Red Glare

Fireworks can be fun, and even beautiful, but they have risks that require judgment and great care. We here at McKenzie Pediatrics hope that you will read the following handout in order to learn how best to keep your children safe this and every Fourth of July.

Consumer fireworks cause serious preventable injuries among child fireworks users and bystanders in the United States. An estimated **86,000** child fireworks-related injuries were treated in US emergency departments during the fourteen-year period from 1990 to 2003. Injured children had a mean age of 11 years, and 78 percent were male. Fireworks users accounted for 50 percent of the injuries, whereas 22 percent were to bystanders; the user status could not be determined in the remaining 28 percent of injured children.

Injuries were most commonly caused by **firecrackers** (30 percent), sparklers (21 percent), and aerial devices (18 percent). The most commonly injured body sites were the **eyeball** (21 percent), face (20 percent), and hands (19 percent). The most common injury type was **burns** (60 percent). Approximately 5 percent of children were injured so severely that hospitalization was required.

In addition to injuries to users and bystanders, fireworks cause property damage. In the most recently reported year in Oregon, 188 fireworks-related fires were reported, according to the state fire marshal.

Oregon is one of 19 states that allow people to use non-aerial and non-explosive fireworks, including novelties, fountains, and sparklers. Five states have banned the sale of ALL fireworks to consumers, and 21 states (including next-door Washington) still permit the sale of many kinds of consumer fireworks.

Fireworks are banned in Oregon state parks, on Oregon beaches, and in federal parks and forests. Oregon also bans POSSESSION OR USE of fireworks that fly, explode, or travel more than 6 feet on the ground or 12 inches in the air. Bottle rockets, Roman candles, and firecrackers are all now illegal.

The state fire marshal reminds us that Oregon officials may seize illegal fireworks and fine offenders as much as \$500 per violation. Those who misuse fireworks or allow fireworks to cause injury to others or damage to property may be liable, and may be required to pay. Parents also may be liable for fireworks damage caused by their children.

The safest way to enjoy the nation's birthday is to take your children to a public fireworks display, rather than permit consumer fireworks to be used at home by or near children. For those reluctant to give up the traditional family fireworks, here's a list of recommendations for safety:

- **Use only legal fireworks available for sale at licensed outlets IN OREGON**
- **Store fireworks out of the reach of children**
- **Always read and follow directions**
- **Keep pets indoors during fireworks use**
- **Always have a garden hose and a bucket of water handy in case of fire**
- **An adult should light the fireworks; keep lighters and matches out of the hands of children**
- **Use fireworks outdoors only**

- **Light fireworks one at a time, and then move away quickly**
- **Keep children at least 6 feet away from lit fireworks**
- **Do not throw fireworks or hold them in your hand once lit**
- **Never relight a “dud”. Instead, soak it and all used fireworks in a bucket of water**

Have a great, and SAFE, Fourth of July!

(Thanks to Arthur Johnson for his article in the Eugene Register-Guard on fireworks safety, from which this handout borrowed heavily.)