

Thousands of Injuries with Sparklers, Firecrackers, and Aerials; CPSC Urges Consumers To Put Safety In Play During the Fourth of July

About 200 fireworks injuries a day during month surrounding the holiday

Washington, DC — The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) wants consumers to put safety in play if fireworks are part of your Fourth of July celebrations. A new CPSC study indicates that in 2009 there were two deaths and nearly 9,000 emergency room visits for injuries resulting from fireworks related incidents. Most fireworks injuries occurred to consumers younger than 20 and resulted in the loss of a limb in many cases.

In a press event held on The National Mall, Chairman Inez Tenenbaum announced that during the 30 days surrounding last year's Independence Day holiday, there were nearly 6,000 reports of injuries involving fireworks. Burns and lacerations to the hands, the face and the head were the most frequently reported injuries. More than half of the injuries during this time period were related to firecrackers, bottle rockets, and sparklers.

"Consumers need to heed our warning: fireworks related incidents, especially those involving illegal fireworks, can be fatal," said CPSC Chairman Inez Tenenbaum. "Only use legal fireworks and follow CPSC's tips to ensure your holiday remains festive and safe."

Chairman Tenenbaum was joined on The Mall by Chief Glenn Gaines, Acting Fire Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Daniel Baldwin, Assistant Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); and Arthur Herbert, Assistant Director, Enforcement Programs and Services, for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Also joining CPSC on the Mall was Jason Henderson. Mr. Henderson lost both hands and sight in his right eye during a fireworks-related incident.

CPSC is working closely with our federal partners to enforce fireworks regulations, protect our ports, prosecute manufacturers and distributors of illegal explosives, and educate the public about the risks associated with fireworks.

"Fireworks not only create significant dangers to citizens when used improperly or illegally but also increase the demands on fire departments and firefighters," said Acting U.S. Fire Administrator Glenn Gaines. "This nation has lost four firefighters as a result of the use of illegal fireworks. Calls to EMS and Fire departments increased as individuals continue to be injured and burned. Almost 9,000 people were injured last year as a result of civilian use of fireworks. With these increased demands the risks to firefighters and EMS personnel needlessly increase when fireworks play gets out of control."

The federal government is committed to stopping the manufacture and sale of illegal fireworks.

"ATF is committed to protecting the public by finding and stopping those who endanger our communities by illegally making and selling explosives devices," said ATF Assistant Director Arthur Herbert. "If you become aware of an illegal manufacturing operation, or see someone selling devices or fireworks illegally, report it immediately to your local law enforcement or to ATF at (888) 283-2662."

Consumers who decide to purchase legal fireworks are encouraged to take the following safety steps:

- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Make sure fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them.
- Avoid buying fireworks that come in brown paper packaging, as this can often be a sign that the fireworks were made for professional displays and could pose a danger to consumers.
- Adults should always supervise fireworks activities. Parents often don't realize that there are many injuries from sparklers to children under five. Sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees - hot enough to melt some metals.
- Never have any portion of your body directly over a fireworks device when lighting the fuse. Move back to a safe distance immediately after lighting.
- Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
- Light one item at a time then move back quickly.
- Never carry fireworks in a pocket or shoot them off in metal or glass containers.
- After fireworks fully complete their functioning, douse the spent device with plenty of water from a bucket or hose before discarding to prevent a trash fire.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from thousands of types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals - contributed significantly to the decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.