



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HAVE A SAFE HOLIDAY **Fireworks Safety Issues**

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is encouraging families to attend **professional, public fireworks displays** this holiday season. Attending a public fireworks display is a safe way to honor our tradition, our shared values, and our hopes for a healthy future.

Permanent scarring, loss of vision, dismemberment – these are all too often the harsh realities of amateur fireworks use. The State Fire Marshal's Office is urging everyone to treat all fireworks, as suitable, only for usage by trained professionals. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), amateur firework usage endangers not only the users, but also bystanders and surrounding property and structures. Pyrotechnic devices ranging from sparklers to aerial rockets cause thousands of fires and serious injuries each year.

“Safe fireworks do not exist,” as stated by State Fire Marshal H “Butch” Browning. “When things go wrong, they go wrong very fast, and often with disastrous consequences.”

In recent years, fireworks have been one of the leading causes of injuries serious enough to require hospital emergency room treatment. Fireworks can result in severe burns, fractures, scars, lifelong disfigurement or even death. The thousands of serious injuries each year typically harm the eyes, head, or hands and are mostly reported in states, such as Louisiana, where fireworks are legal. Even sparklers, which are considered by many to be harmless, can reach temperatures in excess of 1200 degrees F.

Wooded areas, homes, and even automobiles have become engulfed in flames because of fireworks. Firework-related fires have typically caused at least \$21 million in property loss nationally (not adjusted for inflation) in recent years. A substantial portion of the property loss is due to fireworks typically involving bottle rockets or other fireworks such as rockets/aerial devices. Rockets can land on rooftops or wedge within certain structures and still retain enough heat to cause a fire. “A family's home represents the work of a lifetime,” said State Fire Marshal Browning. “Losing your home or having a family member seriously injured because of a fireworks accident would be disastrous. There are safer alternatives to using fireworks this “holiday season”

Public firework displays are one of those alternatives. These are conducted by trained professionals. They are the smartest and safest fireworks alternative for everyone, because they are established under controlled settings and regulations. Clearly, fireworks are capable of devastating and fatal injuries. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there are currently ten states that ban all consumer fireworks. “The fireworks banned in these states **do not** become safer just because they are used in Louisiana or other states; in which, consumer fireworks can be legally purchased,” states Fire Marshal Browning.

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To those citizens of the State who **do** intend to purchase and use fireworks during the upcoming holiday, the Fire Marshal's Office offers the following fireworks safety suggestions:

- Always read and follow the label directions carefully
- Always have a garden hose or water bucket nearby for medical emergencies and/or to douse spent or misfired fireworks.
- Adults should always supervise fireworks activity.
- Fireworks should be placed on a hard, smooth surface prior to ignition. **NEVER** light fireworks in your hand.
- Quickly light one firework at a time, and move away quickly after lighting.
- Never point or throw fireworks at people, pets, cars, or buildings
- Keep fireworks away from small children.
- Do not alter or make your own fireworks.
- After displays, never pick up fireworks that may be left over.

Fireworks that have been ignited and fail to immediately explode or discharge can cause injury, as they may still be active. Children should always tell an adult if they find fireworks rather than picking up smoking or charred fireworks themselves.

Public displays (unless permitted through The Office of State Fire Marshal or local jurisdiction having authority to do so by this office) and retail sales are prohibited in the following parishes: St. Charles, Orleans, East Baton Rouge, and Terrebonne.

Concerning age requirements, Fire Marshal Browning advised that state law prohibits anyone from offering to sell or selling fireworks to any child under the age of fifteen (15). Fire Marshal Browning adds that parents may be held liable for any damages or injuries caused by their children's illegal use of fireworks. He further advises that anyone found selling fireworks without a proper permit from the Office of the State Fire Marshal will be ordered to "cease and desist" operations until a proper permit has been obtained and properly posted. Browning said that his deputies will be inspecting fireworks stands during the retail season to ensure they meet the minimum requirements for fire safety and registration.

Fire Marshal Browning stressed that, due to the fire hazard as well as the inherent risk of injury involved in fireworks, citizens are urged to use extreme caution when handling fireworks to ensure a safe, fire-free holiday. "The few moments of pleasure consumer fireworks bring are not worth the risk of property loss, injury, or death." "Avoid needless risks," as state by State Fire Marshal H "Butch" Browning. "The alternative of a professionally-run public display is, in every way, superior in spectacle and safety."

"Help Us Help You" - Keep Louisiana Safe!

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