



News Release

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Public Safety Services

8181 Independence Blvd.
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.lasfm.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

OFFICE: 225-925-4297

EMAIL:

Assistant Chief Bill Owens

CELL: 225-268-5529

bill.owens@la.gov

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.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal also encourages the safe use of retail fireworks, for those who will be using consumer fireworks. Currently, the State permits about 800 Retail Stands. The inspection of these stands will be conducted during the selling season to assure compliance with safety standards set forth by the CPSC and NFPA requirements.

We encourage families to only purchase their consumer fireworks from retail stands that have been inspected and permitted by this office. We would also encourage anyone to contact this office if they see or notice any suspicious or illegal selling of consumer fireworks or any other type of fireworks.

Illegal fireworks: Anything that is not approved by the consumer product safety commission is considered illegal explosives and they are often unpackaged and/or wrapped with plain brown paper. They go by names such as M80, Quarter Stick or Cherry Bombs.

Consumer fireworks regulated by the Consumer Safety Commission are packaged in bright colors and have safety warning on the packaging with labeling such as 1.4G and UN0336

The State Fire Marshal's Office regulates the fireworks industry and the past has shown that retail stands operate in a safe and compliant manner; however, the use of these devices rely solely on the consumer to follow the recommended safety practices.

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.

The State Fire Marshal's Office is urging everyone to treat all fireworks, as suitable, only for usage by trained and experienced individuals/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. Permanent scarring, loss of vision, dismemberment – these are all too often the harsh realities of amateur fireworks use. Pyrotechnic devices ranging from sparklers to aerial rockets cause thousands of fires and serious injuries each year. "When things go wrong, they go wrong very fast, and often with disastrous consequences," stated Fire Marshal H. "Butch" Browning.

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 \$27 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, if the public wants an alternative. Public firework displays are one of those alternatives. These are conducted by trained and licensed professionals. They are the smartest and safest fireworks alternative for everyone. They are established under controlled settings and regulations. Clearly, fireworks are capable of devastating and fatal injuries.

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 stated that his deputies will be inspecting fireworks stands during the retail season to ensure they meet the minimum requirements for fire safety and registration.

Browning said, "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."

"Let's Work Together in Keeping Louisiana Safe!"

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