



# Fireworks

## Publication #12



The American traditions of parades, cookouts, and fireworks help us celebrate the summer season, especially our nation's birthday on the Fourth of July. However, fireworks can turn a joyful celebration into a painful memory when children and adults are injured or killed while using fireworks. Although legal consumer fireworks that comply with U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regulations can be relatively safe when used responsibly, all fireworks, by their nature, are hazardous and can cause injuries. Fireworks are classified as hazardous substances under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (FHSA). Some fireworks, such as illegal firecracker-type devices (M-80s, quarter sticks) and professional display fireworks should never be handled by non-professionals, due to the risk of serious injury and death.

Following are a few examples of recent deaths caused by legal and illegal fireworks:

***A 34-year-old male and a 35-year-old female died in a house fire. The male victim was making larger fireworks in his home, when a cigarette ignited the fireworks, causing an explosion and a fire.***

***A 17-year-old male created a "sparkler bomb" of about 300 sparklers held together by tape. When he attempted to place a bucket over the lit device, the device exploded unexpectedly. The victim was pronounced dead at the hospital.***

***A 42-year-old male was found dead on a beach after attempting to make a video recording of a lit fireworks device. He reached around a PVC pipe to light the device's fuse with a cigarette. The device exploded, causing the victim to die from a massive head injury.***

To help prevent incidents like these, the federal government, under the FHSA, prohibits the sale to consumers of the most dangerous types of fireworks. These banned fireworks include: large

reloadable mortar shells, cherry bombs, aerial bombs, M-80 salutes, and larger firecrackers containing more than two grains of powder. Mail-order kits designed to build these fireworks are also banned.

The CPSC lowered the permissible charge in firecrackers to no more than 50 milligrams of powder in a regulation that went into effect on Dec. 6, 1976. In addition, CPSC regulations provide performance requirements for fireworks other than firecrackers intended for consumer use, including a requirement that fuses burn at least three seconds, but no longer than nine seconds. All fireworks must carry a warning label describing necessary safety precautions and instructions for safe use.

CPSC estimates that in 2013, about 11,400 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with fireworks. Sixty-five percent of these estimated injuries occurred in a one-month special study period (June 21, 2013 – July 21, 2013) around July 4. During the 2013 special study, more than half of the fireworks-related injuries were burns. Most of the injuries involved the head (including face, eyes, and ears), hands, fingers, and legs. Children under the age of 15 years old accounted for 40 percent of the estimated injuries. Fireworks should be used only with extreme caution. Older children should be closely supervised, and younger children should not be allowed to play with fireworks, including sparklers.

Before using fireworks, make sure they are permitted in your state or local area. Many state and local governments prohibit or limit consumer fireworks, formerly known as "class C fireworks," which are common fireworks, and firecrackers sold for consumer use. Consumer fireworks include: shells and mortars, multiple tube devices, Roman candles, rockets, sparklers, firecrackers with no more than 50 milligrams of powder, and novelty items, such as snakes, airplanes, ground spinners,

helicopters, fountains, and party poppers.

To help consumers use fireworks more safely, the CPSC offers these recommendations:

-- Do not allow young children to play with fireworks under any circumstances. Sparklers, a firework often considered by many to be the ideal "safe" device for the young, burn at very high temperatures and should be not be handled by young children. Children may not understand the danger involved with fireworks and may not act appropriately while using the devices or in case of emergency.

-- Older children should be permitted to use fireworks only under close adult supervision. Do not allow any running or horseplay.

-- Set off fireworks outdoors in a clear area, away from houses, dry leaves, or grass and other flammable materials.

-- Keep a bucket of water nearby for emergencies and for pouring on fireworks that fail to ignite or explode.

-- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak them with water and throw them away.

-- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.

-- Never light fireworks in a container, especially a glass or metal container.

-- Keep unused fireworks away from firing areas.

-- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place.

-- Check instructions for special storage directions.

-- Observe local laws.

-- Never have any portion of your body directly over a firework while lighting.

-- Do not experiment with homemade fireworks.

**MAIL-ORDER "MAKE-YOUR-OWN"  
FIREWORKS KITS AND  
COMPONENTS—DESIGNED TO BUILD BANNED  
FIREWORKS—ARE PROHIBITED BY LAW.**

Following is a summary of state regulations as of June 1, 2014:

**I. STATES THAT ALLOW SOME OR ALL  
TYPES OF CONSUMER FIREWORKS**  
(formerly known as class C fireworks),  
**APPROVED BY ENFORCING AUTHORITY,  
OR AS SPECIFIED IN LAW** (40 states, District  
of Columbia and Puerto Rico):

Alabama	Nebraska
Alaska	New Hampshire
Arkansas	New Mexico
California	Nevada
Colorado	North Carolina
Connecticut	North Dakota
Florida	Oklahoma
Georgia	Oregon
Hawaii	Pennsylvania
Idaho	Rhode Island
Indiana	South Carolina
Kansas	South Dakota
Kentucky	Tennessee
Louisiana	Texas
Maryland	Utah
Michigan	Virginia
Minnesota	Washington
Mississippi	West Virginia
Missouri	Wisconsin
Montana	Wyoming

(The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, in addition to the above states, enforce the federal regulations and applicable state restrictions.)

**II. STATES THAT ALLOW ONLY SPAR-  
KERS AND/OR OTHER NOVELTIES** (Total  
of 5 states):

Illinois	Ohio
Iowa	Vermont
Maine	

**III. STATES THAT ALLOW ONLY  
NOVELTY FIREWORKS** (Total of 1 state):

Arizona

**IV. STATES THAT BAN ALL CONSUMER  
FIREWORKS** (including those that are allowed  
by CPSC regulations) (Total of 4 states):

Delaware                      New York  
Massachusetts  
New Jersey

Regardless of location, consumers who intend to use fireworks have to comply with federal regulations and applicable state restrictions.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, log on to: [www.saferproducts.gov](http://www.saferproducts.gov), or call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772, or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or e-mail [info@cpsc.gov](mailto:info@cpsc.gov).

Consumers can obtain press releases and recall information at CPSC's website at: [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). This document is in the public domain. It may be reproduced in whole, or in part, by an individual or organization without permission. If it is reproduced, however, the Commission would appreciate knowing how it is used. Please provide this information by writing to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Office of Communications, 4330 East West Highway, Bethesda MD 20814.

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