

<http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/fireworks.html>

## Fireworks Safety

Fireworks safety starts before a firework is even sold: It begins with the manufacturers, who need to follow strict quality controls in making their products. That doesn't mean every firework is guaranteed to be safe, though. Things can go wrong with fireworks, just as they can with any product, and most of the time it's because the fireworks aren't handled properly. That's the reason you see all those warnings on fireworks.

In 2002 almost 9,000 people were taken to hospital emergency rooms in the United States because of injuries from fireworks - including bottle rockets, sparklers, and firecrackers. The good news is that number is down from 11,000 people in 2000, so increasing awareness about injury - and the fact that high-quality displays attract more people - has made a difference. The most common fireworks injuries involve the hands, fingers, eyes, head, and face. Some of these injuries are severe, resulting in permanent health problems such as missing fingers and limbs and vision loss.

So what can you do to enjoy the Fourth of July and still stay safe? Going to public fireworks displays is the best approach. Not only are these displays bigger and brighter (the federal government bans the sale of the largest fireworks to the public), but many states have laws that don't allow people to buy or use fireworks. Before using fireworks, find out what the laws are in your area. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) provides more information about state and federal regulations on its website.

If you live in a state that allows fireworks and you're planning a do-it-yourself celebration, follow these safety tips to protect yourself and the people watching:

- \* Buy ready-made fireworks rather than making your own, even from a kit.
- \* Make sure an adult is present at all times.
- \* Don't allow little kids to operate fireworks, even sparklers.

\* Buy only legal fireworks that have a label with instructions for proper use. If your fireworks don't have an instruction label, they're probably illegal to use.

\* Choose fireworks that are appropriate for the area you'll be using them in. For example, avoid using rockets or other aerial fireworks in the backyard of a busy street. Choose fountain-type fireworks instead.

\* Follow all the directions on the label closely.

\* Always use fireworks outside with a bucket of water or hose nearby. Keep fireworks away from dry leaves and other materials that can easily catch on fire.

\* Light one firework at a time. Keep the firework you're lighting well away from unlit fireworks.

\* Point fireworks away from people. If you're lighting a firework, wear eye protection and don't lean over the firework.

\* If a firework doesn't seem to work, don't go over to it or attempt to relight it. Stand back for a while. If you can reach it with a hose or bucket without getting too close, douse it with water.

\* Soak all fireworks in a bucket of water before throwing them away.

\* Store fireworks in a cool, dry place.

\* If someone gets an eye injury from fireworks, don't rub the eye or attempt to wash it out. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. It could make the difference between saving a person's sight and permanent blindness.

This information was compiled by

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