

# FIREWORKS

## **A Painful Lesson**

Decades of tragic experience teach this lesson: **Fireworks are dangerous.**

Handled by professionals, fireworks add immensely to our enjoyment of many holidays, including the Fourth of July, Canada Day, Chinese New Year, and Mardi Gras. But to keep holidays from turning to tragedies, leave fireworks to professionals, who take extensive safety precautions when producing their spectacular displays.

## **Injuries**

Young people suffer the great majority of fireworks injuries, most frequently injuries to the eyes, head, or hands. Losing your sight or losing a finger is a tragic price to pay for a few minutes of fun with fireworks. Even seemingly harmless sparklers cause many injuries. For children under 5, sparklers account for three quarters of a fireworks injuries. Fascinated by the bright sparks, little children may wrap their hands around a stick of fire that can be as hot as 1800 F.

## **People Have a Lot to Lose**

Injuries are only part of the problem. In 1987, local fire departments were called to some 36,900 fires started by fireworks. Those fires caused property damage totaling \$25 million. And, yes, people do die from fireworks injuries and from fires started by fireworks. Fortunately, the death toll is a lot lower than it was in 1902, when fireworks were legal in most states. That year, fireworks and fireworks-related fires killed more than 200 people.

For all these reasons, those who see the injuries and damage from fireworks - physicians and fire fighters - agree on this strong warning: leave fireworks to the professionals.

## **Does Legal Mean Safe?**

Don't think that fireworks are safe just because they're legal in your state. The largest share of fireworks injuries is caused by Class C fireworks, the kind that are legal in many states. The same fireworks that are legal in one state have been banned in many others because of the injuries, fires and deaths they cause.

Legal fireworks carry the name of the manufacturer, the words "Class C Common Fireworks," and a warning label. If these are missing, the fireworks you're looking at are probably illegal, and you should consider them extremely unsafe.

Though all fireworks are hazardous, illegal fireworks pose extra dangers. Illegal fireworks are typically very powerful and are made without the quality control standards of legal products. This makes them extremely unpredictable.

The following kinds of fireworks are illegal in all states, banned by federal law:

### **Cherry Bomb:**

Red, approximately 1" in diameter

### **M-80**

Generally red or brown,  
approx. 1/2" to 1" long

**Silver Salute:**

Silver, up to  
2" long

**M-100:**

Silver or buff,  
approx. 1", to 1-1/2" long

We urge everyone to leave fireworks to the professionals. If you must have legal fireworks, look for these danger signals:

- Fireworks that are leaking powder, appear to be quite old, or show any signs of improper handling. These may fire unpredictably. Avoid them.
- Fireworks that appear to have been wet and then dried. Water degrades the sensitivity and explosive chemicals inside and may affect the fuses.

Play it really safe, and let professionals handle the fireworks. Professional fireworks make a better display, which you and your family can watch in safety.

***Fire Safety Education ... the Best Fire Prevention***

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Pamphlet courtesy of the Rolling Oaks Volunteer Fire Department  
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