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## Ooh! Ahh! Ow? Fireworks officials encourage parents to light safety spark

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The colorful sparkles of fireworks have rained down on celebrations around the globe for thousands of years. From bottle rockets to comets and palm trees to sparklers, fireworks have lit up the skies of many warm summer nights.

Although beautiful, the delicate sprays of green, gold and orange can quickly turn into the red and white strobe of an ambulance if extreme caution is not exercised while handling fireworks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in 2006, the last year a fireworks-related injury report was generated, 11 people died and an estimated 9,200 were treated in emergency departments for fireworks-related injuries in the United States.

The Army is not immune to these statistics. Just four years ago, a Soldier lost his eye after a firework ignited prematurely and hit him in the face.

“Due to their explosive and heat related nature, fireworks must be handled with extreme caution,” Tracey Russell, a safety specialist at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, said. “Those who choose to handle fireworks must always be mindful not only of themselves and how they are handling the fireworks but also where they are handling them, who else is around and what the weather conditions are.”

Ralph Apel, president of the National Council on Fireworks Safety (NCFS), said fireworks safety simply comes down to one important tool – common sense.

“If consumers would use common sense and read all label warnings and performance descriptions on the fireworks they purchase, they would know what to expect when they light them,” he said.

Russell said the common sense approach to fireworks safety also includes understanding that alcohol and explosives don't mix.



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“When you are dealing with fireworks, something that burns very hot, you need to use extreme caution,” she said. “If you are impaired by alcohol, you may not be using the amount of caution you should and could end up hurting yourself or someone else.”

Apel said this year, he and his team at NCFS are working hard to remind parents that fireworks are not toys and that all fireworks, including the universally recognized sparklers, present the potential for danger and injury.

“If parents took the time to explain fireworks to their children and demonstrate safe use, injuries from sparklers and other fireworks could be reduced,” he said. “Right now, 16 percent of all consumer fireworks injuries are caused by sparklers and we want this number to go down, we want parents to know that a bucket of water and some supervision could greatly reduce these injuries.”

Russell said because all fireworks present some level of danger, the best thing to do to ensure a safe and fun fireworks experience is to simply watch a professional show.

“Go out, relax and let someone else do the dangerous work while you sit back and enjoy,” she said.

For more information about fireworks safety, visit [www.fireworksafety.com](http://www.fireworksafety.com). For information about the Army’s Safe Summer Campaign, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.

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### **Sparkler Safety**

- Sparklers should always be used under close adult supervision.
- Always remain standing while using sparklers.
- Never hold a child in your arms while using sparklers.
- Never hold or light more than one sparkler at a time.
- Sparklers and bare feet can be a painful combination. Always wear closed-toe shoes when using sparklers.
- Sparkler wires and sticks remain hot long after the flame has gone out. Be sure to drop the spent sparklers directly in a bucket of water.
- Never hand a lighted sparkler to another person. Give them the unlit sparkler and then light it.
- Always stand at least six feet from another person while using sparklers.
- Never throw sparklers.
- Show children how to hold sparklers away from their body and at arm’s length.
- Teach children not to wave sparklers or run while holding sparklers.

Source: [www.fireworksafety.com](http://www.fireworksafety.com)