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## Enjoy Fireworks — Safely!

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Thousands of Americans enjoy shooting fireworks every year, and while fireworks-related injuries are on the decline, everyone should remain vigilant when handling pyrotechnics.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, hospital emergency rooms treated approximately 8,600 people for fireworks-related injuries during 2010. Of those injuries, 73 percent occurred between June 18 and July 18. An estimated 1,200 ER visits were associated with sparklers, 900 with firecrackers and 400 with bottle rockets.

Though fireworks are readily available in many states, Soldiers, Family members and Civilians must ensure they are buying legal fireworks and understand the hazards associated with handling explosives.

The USFA reports that two out of five people injured in 2010 were under the age of 15, and even a seemingly harmless sparkler burns at about 2,000 F.

“Parents need to teach their children fireworks safety just like they teach them other safety lessons around the house,” said Ralph Apel, spokesperson for the National Council on Fireworks Safety. “When using sparklers, individuals should be 12 years old or older.”

“There’s nothing wrong with enjoying fireworks at your home with friends and Family as long as you do so safely,” said Lt. Col. Spencer Ashford, director, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center Ground Directorate. “But sometimes it’s a good idea to err on the side of caution and let the pros handle the fireworks show.”

Officials at the NCFS offer the following tips for a safe, enjoyable fireworks display: only shoot fireworks outdoors; obey all local laws; always keep water handy; only use fireworks as intended; never relight a dud; read all warning labels; and never use illegal or homemade fireworks.

“We have a multitude of safety tips and resources available on our website, [www.fireworkssafety.org](http://www.fireworkssafety.org),” said Apel. “What I always like to stress to folks is have a designated shooter, use common sense, and remember alcohol and fireworks do not mix.”

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