



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF LOUISIANA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Play it Safe” This July Fourth

Baton Rouge, LA – Whether it is the beautiful and colorful skyward streams of sparks and lights, or the pops, crackles, and loud booms, one thing is clear: fireworks are synonymous with Independence Day celebrations around the country.

Unfortunately, the improper handling, or illegal use of fireworks, can spoil what should be a great time by inflicting serious injuries and causing catastrophic property damage.

As July Fourth approaches, the State Fire Marshal’s Office would like to remind the many who will purchase and use fireworks at family gatherings across this state that great care must be exercised while using fireworks.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimates that fireworks cause over 18,000 fires each year in America, which includes approximately 2,000 structures and vehicles, resulting in millions of dollars in damages. In perspective, one in every four fires caused by fireworks each year occurred on July Fourth.

Worse, each year an estimated 10–11,000 people are treated or hospitalized for fireworks-related injuries, many of those involving hands, fingers, and eyes. Sadly, those who are more at risk of injury by fireworks are children between the ages of 5–10.

The State Fire Marshal’s Office encourages people to “play it safe” by taking advantage of the dozens of organized celebrations throughout Louisiana in the days leading up to July Fourth and where the fireworks displays are conducted by professional pyrotechnic operators.

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However, for those who choose to handle fireworks themselves, the State Fire Marshal's Office and the National Council on Fireworks Safety suggests the following steps be taken to promote an injury and damage-free Fourth of July:

- Purchase fireworks only from licensed retailers. State law requires retailers be licensed through the State Fire Marshal's Office.
- Always remember that there is no such thing as a "safe firework."
- Only use fireworks outdoors and away from overhead obstructions, such as structural overhangs and trees.
- Be aware of your surroundings and avoid igniting fireworks near flammable materials, such as dry grass, shrubbery, or trees.
- Children should never be allowed to ignite fireworks, nor left alone with access to them.
- The use of alcohol should be avoided when using fireworks.
- Safety glasses should be worn by those who will be handling and igniting fireworks.
- Light one firework at a time and move quickly away.
- Have a bucket of water and charged water hose nearby.
- Never attempt to relight a "dud" firework. Wait at least 20 minutes before picking it up and tossing it into the bucket of water.
- Avoid carrying fireworks in your pockets or shooting them into a metal or glass container.
- Never experiment with "homemade" fireworks and avoid those who do.
- Report illegal fireworks, such as those designated as an M-80 or "quarter stick."
- Always obey the local laws and ordinances regarding the use of fireworks.

For more information on fireworks safety, please visit the websites of the National Fire Protection Association at <http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/by-topic/wildfire-and-seasonal-fires/fireworks>, and the National Council on Fireworks Safety at <http://www.fireworkssafety.org/>.

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