



This Fourth of July, Think Fireworks Safety First



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Editor's Note: Local city ordinances may ban the use of fireworks, including sparklers. Depending on weather conditions, local governments may also have restrictions in place for fireworks use. Wisconsin residents should pay attention to their local media outlets for any announcements.

MADISON – With a burst of light, a bang, and a cascade of glowing embers, fireworks season is here again. Fireworks displays are a cornerstone of our nation's celebration of the Fourth of July, and while many folks take in the sights and sounds at public events, some families choose to bring the excitement of fireworks to their own homes. State officials ask that families use best safety practices when dealing with fireworks, especially in the presence of children.

"Children love to watch fireworks displays, but they should always observe from a safe distance," said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Wisconsin's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "Only adults should handle fireworks."

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, an average of 230 people visit emergency rooms nationwide EACH DAY in the month around July 4th.

In 2015, 11 Wisconsin residents were hospitalized and 108 visited emergency departments due to fireworks-related injuries, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). The number of emergency room visits has steadily increased since 2012. Nearly 50 percent of those injured are between the ages of 25-54, and one in five injury cases involve children under the age of 15.

"We know fireworks are an important Fourth of July tradition for many Wisconsin families, and we want to make sure these celebrations don't end up with a trip to the emergency room," said State Health Officer Karen McKeown. "Injuries can include burns, as well as loss of vision, hearing, or extremities, and sometimes even death, which could be prevented by safe use of fireworks."

Wisconsin law regulates the use of fireworks. Fireworks such as roman candles, firecrackers, bottle rockets, mortars – anything that explodes or leaves the ground – can only be purchased and used with a permit issued by your local government.

Non-explosive devices such as sparklers (not exceeding 36 inches in length), toy snakes, and cones do not require a permit, but that does not mean they can be used safely by children. More than half of the nation's reported fireworks-related injuries are burns. Sparklers, which many parents believe are safe, burn at temperatures of up to 2,000 degrees and can cause serious burns.

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There are safe alternatives to fireworks that can keep children entertained over the holiday weekend. Consider stocking up on flashing LED lights or glow sticks, bracelets, or necklaces. They stay cool to the touch, remain lit throughout the night, and are available in a wide range of colors, keeping your children entertained a lot longer than a sparkler or a firework. As an added benefit, any of these items will help make a child visible to a driver after nightfall.

If you plan to use fireworks, follow these tips to ensure a safe Fourth of July holiday for your family:

- Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Read and follow all warnings and instructions.
- A responsible adult should closely supervise all fireworks activities.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from any buildings, flammable materials, and dry leaves and grass.
- Light one item at a time and then move back quickly.
- Never carry fireworks in a pocket or light them in or near metal or glass containers.
- Keep a bucket of water or a hose handy in case of a malfunction or fire.
- **Always remember – if fireworks fizzle and don't ignite, douse them with water and do not relight them.**

Find additional information on fireworks safety on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/injury-prevention/fireworks.htm>.

For consumer information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on the web at datcp.wisconsin.gov, by e-mail at datcphotline@wisconsin.gov, by phone at 1-800-422-7128, or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/wiconsumer.

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