

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035
shecker@preventblindness.org

Prevent Blindness Urges Public to Celebrate Independence Day Safely by Not Using Consumer Fireworks

- Non-profit Group Provides Ideas on Ways Families Can Celebrate without Risk of Injury -

CHICAGO (June 20, 2014) – Every year, injuries from consumer fireworks send thousands to the emergency room. In fact, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) stated in its [annual report](#) that there were an estimated 8,700 injuries treated in emergency rooms in the United States, with the majority of those around the Fourth of July holiday.

According to the report, children younger than 15 years of age accounted for approximately 30 percent of the estimated injuries. And of the total overall injuries, 12 percent, or 600, were to the eyes. Burns were the most common injury to all parts of the body, except the eyes, where contusions, lacerations, and foreign bodies in the eyes occurred more frequently

Gary A. Smith, MD, DrPH, president of the [Child Injury Prevention Alliance](#) (CIPA), is a pediatric emergency medicine physician and an expert on the damage that consumer fireworks can have on the body. Not only has he authored several published studies on fireworks-related injuries, he has treated many of them as well.

One case in particular that left an impression on Dr. Smith was that of a 4-year-old girl who was standing next to her mother as another family member lit a bottle rocket in their backyard. The bottle rocket took an unexpected path and flew toward the girl. Because it happened so quickly, nobody had a chance to react before the rocket struck the girl in the eye. The damage was so severe that the girl sustained permanent vision loss in that eye.

“Unfortunately, this was just one of the many painful and serious injuries to children that I’ve seen related to fireworks over the years,” said Dr. Smith. “Our studies show that parental supervision is not enough to prevent consumer fireworks injuries to children – in fact, children who are simply bystanders and not even handling the fireworks are often injured. The words that I hear when parents bring their child crying in pain to the emergency department after a firework injury are always the same: ‘Doctor, I can’t believe that this happened to my child. I was standing right there, but it happened so fast that I could not do anything in time to stop it from happening’. These are good

parents who simply believed the myth that these products could be used safely. Do not make that mistake with your family.”

Dr. Smith will be participating on behalf of the CIPA along with the Ohio affiliate of Prevent Blindness and other leading groups in its annual educational event on the dangers of fireworks. The “Fireworks Safety News Conference” will be held on June 26 at 10 a.m. at the Ohio Statehouse – Atrium.

[Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, offers alternatives to celebrate the holiday safely:

- Paint flower pots with red, white and blue paint and glitter. Then plant a seed.
- Make pinwheels or wind socks with an Independence Day theme.
- After the sun goes down, wrap flashlights in colored cellophane to provide fun shades of light.
- Purchase non-toxic glow-sticks, ropes and jewelry that can safely light the night for kids.
- Create your own noisemakers by banging wooden spoons on pots and pans. Search your house for horns, whistles and bells and other items to create a marching band.
- Make your own firecracker sounds by popping bubble wrap.
- Using yarn, craft sticks, paint and construction paper, families can make the United States flag.
- Make 4th of July rockets by using paper towel rolls, paint, streamers and paper cement.
- Let kids create in the kitchen by making fun desserts using blueberries, strawberries and whipping cream for star-spangled treats.
- Have children design and decorate their own t-shirts and hats using glow in the dark paints. Add puffy paints and glitter to make them sparkle.
- Use hypoallergenic face paint or make-up to make designs on your child's face. Adults should apply the face paint and remove it with cold cream or eye make-up remover instead of soap. Follow product guidelines about applying product directly around the eyes.

As a public health-based organization, Prevent Blindness continues to support the development and enforcement of bans on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks and sparklers, except for authorized public displays by competent licensed operators. The group believes such bans are the only effective means of eliminating the social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and damage.

For more information on the dangers of fireworks, please call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020 or log on to preventblindness.org/prevent-eye-injuries-fireworks. For details on the Fireworks Safety News Conference, please call (614) 464-2020 or visit preventblindness.org/ohio.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

###