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Quad City Times
06-30-17

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Letter: Are home fireworks worth the risk?

7 hrs ago

As the Fourth of July nears, the Illinois Insurance Association encourages everyone to prevent injuries, property damage and even death.

About 10,500 people were injured by fireworks, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission's most recent annual fireworks report. Those injuries include 3,800 burns, 1,300 eye injuries, 800 trunk injuries and 11 deaths. Children comprise about 10 percent of the total injuries in emergency rooms, and nearly 30 percent of overall fireworks-related injuries result from sparkler use.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates 15,600 reported fires to homes, vehicles and undeveloped land. In the CPSC's 2014 annual fireworks report, four of those 11 reported deaths occurred to people who were not doing fireworks themselves, but died in house fires caused by fireworks.

With all of this in mind, is lighting off your own fireworks worth the risk? We want you to enjoy this Fourth of July, but we hope you'll let the professionals who are trained, tested and licensed, set off the fireworks.

If you still choose to do your own display, buy legal fireworks and keep these safety tips in mind:

- Never allow children to use fireworks, including sparklers
- Follow federal and state fireworks laws
- Use fireworks in clear, open areas

- Light fireworks on flat surfaces
- Have fire extinguishers and hoses ready
- Store and dispose of fireworks safely
- Know how to handle firework duds

- Light fireworks carefully
- Once lit, keep your distance
- Do not experiment with fireworks

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Editor's note: Martin is executive director, Illinois Insurance Association