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Fireworks injure thousands of people every Fourth of July

To The Herald-Whig:

The Fourth of July holiday is approaching fast. Independence Day is a time to celebrate, reflect on freedom and, of course, enjoy fireworks. Federal, state and local laws and ordinances restrict — and often prohibit — the use of fireworks. Despite these limitations, hospitals treat thousands of firework-related injuries every year, and fire departments respond to numerous fires related to hot sparks and falling debris.

Fireworks are explosive and extremely hot. Mishandling them can have life-altering consequences. The Illinois Insurance Association and its member companies urge families to leave the firework displays to professionals. Residents resolved in putting on their own shows should keep the following tips in mind:

- Be familiar with federal, state and local laws related to fireworks.
- Only adults should use fireworks. Firecrackers, reloadable shells, Roman candles, bottle rockets and novelties

may seem harmless, but they cause 41 percent of firework-related injuries, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Another 19 percent are related to sparklers, which can burn at temperatures as high as 1,200 to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Set off fireworks outside, in a clear, flat, open area clear of combustible debris.
- Keep a water bucket or garden hose near the light-off location.
- Use water to extinguish deployed fireworks and then place them in a metal trash can. Do not relight duds. Soak the nonfunctioning firework in a water bucket before throwing it away.

The Illinois Insurance Association reminds residents to be cautious around fireworks in the coming weeks. Have a safe and happy holiday.

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