



Title: **Beware of things that go boom in the night**  
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## EDITORIAL

# Beware of things that go boom in the night

**I**ndependence Day is still two weeks away, but already backyard fireworks are booming around the Quad-Cities.

That's because we're nearly in the heart of fireworks season, and rescue workers are bracing for it. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, about 60% of fireworks injuries will be sustained between Thursday, June 20, and Saturday, July 20.

And they won't be occurring only in Iowa, where possession and use of pyrotechnics is legal under state law. Illinois Quad-Cities neighborhoods also are hearing the rat-a-tat-tat of firecrackers even though the state remains one of just four that both ban fireworks and provide hefty penalties for illegally using them. That law, however, is not often enforced and routinely ignored.

But even if legality does not matter to many fireworks fans, safety always should. After all, fireworks are dangerous, perhaps in ways that enthusiasts have never considered.

Consider that David Dierks, Genesis emergency department physician, reported in 2017 that sparklers account for about one-fifth of the total fireworks-related injuries seen in emergency departments. That, no doubt, contributes to the troubling fact that about one-quarter of all fireworks-related injuries are sustained by children 9 years old and younger.

Certainly, Kevin J. Martin, executive director of the Illinois Insurance Association, is right that "only adults should use fireworks." But as he and the insurance industry know well, kids often do, with or without parental consent.

Very often, a parent believes a child is ready to

handle fireworks because he or she says so.

"Firecrackers, reloadable shells, Roman candles, bottle rockets and novelties may seem harmless, but they cause 41% of firework-related injuries, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission," Martin warns. "Another 19% are related to sparklers, which can burn at temperatures as high as 1,200 to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit." A child who, say, stumbles and falls while carrying one can be severely burned.

And injuries aren't the only concern. The National Fire Protection Association says, on Independence Day, far more fires are reported than on any other day.

No wonder emergency workers continue to urge Quad-Citians to forgo the backyard bottle rockets and take in a spectacular display such as the July 3 Red, White and Boom!

For many, however, the homegrown, backyard shows will go on.

To make them safer, here are some recommendations that have been shared by Genesis and the product safety commission:

Don't let young children light fireworks, including sparklers.

Do not buy fireworks packaged in brown paper or tubing that are made for professional displays.

Never place any part of your body directly over a device when lighting the fuse. Back to a safe distance immediately after lighting.

Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy.

Never try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak them with water and throw them away.

Never point or throw fireworks at anyone.

Light fireworks one at a time.

After they are burned out, soak them with water.

Light fireworks outdoors in areas clear of houses, dry leaves, grass or flammable materials.

Light them on smooth, flat surfaces.

Don't place fireworks in containers.