



Title: **Be safe**
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Be safe

Fireworks are on the minds of many now. The Illinois Insurance Association and its member companies encourage residents to remember that fireworks are dangerous explosives that need to be handled with extreme caution.

Personal fireworks are responsible for thousands of injuries and structural fires each year. Sparklers seem harmless but burn at temperatures as high as 1,200 to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Protect yourself and your loved ones by leaving the fireworks display to professionals.

Residents bent on lighting displays are urged to confirm compliance with federal, state and local laws and ordinances and make safety a priority. Some tips to keep in mind:

- Buy pre-packaged fireworks from a licensed store or stand. Homemade and professional-grade fireworks are unsafe for personal use.

- Store fireworks in a cool,

dry, dark location away from any source of heat until ready to light.

- Designate a sober adult to oversee lighting fireworks. Alcohol and drugs do not mix well with explosives. Confirm children are supervised and well away from the staging area. Move pets inside.

- Light one firework at a time in a flat, open, outside location away from homes and buildings.

- Maintain a safe distance from guests. Never point fireworks toward the crowd.

- Read package directions before igniting and wear safety glasses.

- Keep a hose and water bucket near the lighting area. Thoroughly soak spent fireworks in water before disposal.

- Never relight a dud firework.

Enjoy the Fourth of July, but celebrate safely and responsibly.

**Kevin J. Martin
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(Martin is executive director of the Illinois Insurance Association.)