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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Have fun, be cautious with fireworks

Independence Day is approaching, and fireworks will soon dominate the sky. The Illinois Insurance Association and its member companies encourage residents to choose professional fireworks shows over backyard exhibitions.

Fireworks are dangerous explosives. Mishandling fireworks can have life-altering consequences. Unfortunately, hospitals treat thousands of firework-related injuries every year. Nearly a quarter of these cases are children burned by sparklers. Property damage is also an issue as fire departments put out fires related to hot embers and falling debris.

Individuals determined to stage their fireworks should remember the following tips.

• Federal, state, and local laws and ordinances restrict — and often prohibit personal fireworks displays. Find out what's allowed in your locale.

• Identify a responsible, sober adult to light fireworks. Keep children far from the launch area. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that firecrackers, reloadable shells, Roman candles, bottle rockets, and novelties cause 41 percent of firework-related injuries. Another 19 percent are related to sparklers, which can burn at temperatures up to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

• Set off fireworks 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 place them in a metal trash can. Do not re-light duds. Soak nonfunctioning fireworks in a water bucket before disposal.

Fourth of July celebrations are a fun, family tradition. Protect your loved ones by attending an approved fireworks display this year.

Kevin J. Martin, Executive Director, Illinois Insurance Association, Springfield

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