Champaign The News-Gazette
Publication Date: 06/30/2023 Page Number: A04



Title: **Be careful with fireworks**
Author:
Size: 16.58 square inch
Champaign, IL Circulation: 21742

FROM OUR READERS

Be careful 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 fireworks-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 fireworks-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 free of combustible debris.

➜ Keep a water bucket or garden hose nearby.

➜ 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
Illinois Insurance Association
Springfield

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