

Safety Theme:

State Fire Marshal Cautions Citizens About Fireworks Safety During July 4th Celebrations

For many in **South Carolina**, fireworks have become a way of life during the holidays – beautifully colored sparks flying through the air in concert with loud rumbling explosions. As exciting as this may seem, people often forget that they are playing with dangerous chemicals and combustibles that can destroy property and injure people. These deceptively simple objects explode, throw hot sparks through the air, and can often reach temperatures hotter than 1,200 degrees.

In South Carolina, during 2008, 238 fireworks-related fire incidents were reported by fire departments, resulting in approximately \$115,000 loss. “The safest way to enjoy fireworks is by attending a public fireworks display,” warns **John Reich, South Carolina State Fire Marshal**. If you plan to shoot your own fireworks make sure they are legal to use in your area and pay particular attention to safety tips to help reduce the chances of a destructive fire and/or injury:

- Only purchase fireworks from a licensed dealer that sells certified fireworks.
- Avoid buying fireworks that come in brown paper packaging, as this is often a sign that the fireworks were made for professional shows and could pose a danger to consumers.
- Never allow young children to play with fireworks.
- Adults should always supervise fireworks activities. Parents often don't realize that sparklers have caused more injuries to children under age five than any other type of firework. Sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees – hot enough to melt some metals.
- Never have any portion of your body directly over a firework device when lighting the fuse. Move back a safe distance immediately after lighting.
- Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not fully functioned. Douse and soak with water and throw them away.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
- Light one item at a time, and then move back quickly.
- Never carry fireworks in a pocket or shoot them off in metal or glass containers.
- Avoid the combination of alcohol, drugs and fireworks.

Enjoy the July 4th celebration safely and remember to practice fire safety every day. Plan your escape, install and maintain smoke alarms, and install residential fire sprinklers. The life they save may be yours!