



Fireworks safety

Despite efforts to educate people about the hazards of home fireworks, the problem persists.

Firecrackers, bottle rockets and sparklers cause most fireworks injuries, with firecrackers accounting for the 30 percent of the injuries. Even seemingly harmless sparklers burn at temperatures as high as 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit and can cause disfiguring burns.

Most injuries result from misuse, including holding firecrackers too long, picking up lighted fireworks and having fireworks explode near a bystander. Common injuries include second and third degree burns, partial or total loss of sight, lacerations and fractures.

The North Dakota Safety Council strongly urges people to avoid all home fireworks. Some people, however, will still conduct backyard fireworks displays despite laws against their use and the great danger to themselves and others. For those people who insist on putting themselves at risk, the North Dakota Safety Council reluctantly offers the following suggestions to minimize the chance of injuries from fireworks to users and bystanders.

- Always light fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from onlookers, houses and flammable materials.
- Light one device at a time; maintain a safe distance after lighting the devices.

- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks; douse and soak them with water and discard them safely.
- Never allow young children to handle fireworks.
- Older children should use fireworks only under close adult supervision.
- Do not allow any running or horseplay while fireworks are being used.
- Never ignite devices in a container.
- Always store fireworks in a dry, cool place and avoid rough handling that might damage the fuse or handles.

As a preventive measure, keep a bucket of water nearby when conducting a home display. Use the water to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off immediately. Cool water should be applied to burns. If a person suffers a serious injury, get immediate medical assistance.

Above all — the best way to have a blast this summer, without endangering yourself or others, is to watch and safely enjoy a public fireworks display conducted by professionals.