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Enjoy the Fourth of July holiday and still stay safe

Every year, injuries from fireworks result in people being taken to hospital emergency rooms on the July Fourth holiday. In 2008, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 7,000 people for fireworks-related injuries. Of those injuries, 53 percent were to the extremities and 37 percent were to the head.

The data from these emergency room visits also show that the risk of fireworks injuries are the highest for teens between ages 15-19 and for children between ages 5-9. Injuries in both of these groups are at least two and one-half times the risk for the general population.

So what can you do to enjoy the Independence Day holiday and still stay safe?

Going to publicly held fireworks displays is the best approach. Not only are these displays bigger and brighter (the federal government bans the sale of the largest fireworks to the general public), but many states have laws that don't allow people to buy or use fireworks. Before using fireworks, find out what the laws are in your area. In the Florida, consumer use of fireworks by the public is illegal.

Risk of personal injury from July 4 fireworks is not the only factor to consider. In 2008, fireworks caused an estimated 22,500 reported fires, including 1,400 total structure fires, 500 vehicle fires and 20,600 outside and other fires. These fires resulted in one civilian death, and an estimated 40 civilian injuries and \$42 million in direct property damage.

For more information regarding fireworks safety, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for the Fire Prevention Office or visit the county's website at www.scgov.net.

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