

Fireworks: Don't Get Burned! 6/2008

CONSUMER ALERT

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ATTORNEY GENERAL**

The Attorney General provides Consumer Alerts to inform the public of unfair, misleading or deceptive business practices, and to provide information and guidance on other issues of concern.

FIREWORKS: DON'T GET BURNED!

On the Fourth of July and other celebrations that occasion the use of fireworks, we all need to ensure fireworks safety.

Between 2000 and 2006, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reported that 49 people were killed nationwide while using fireworks. In Michigan, the deadly nature of fireworks struck close to home on July 4, 2007, when a Melvindale mother of three was killed after being struck by a commercial-grade firework. In 2007, there were 10,800 people injured by fireworks in the U.S., with children under the age of 15 accounting for one-third of those injuries. A CPSC study found that firecrackers, rockets, and sparklers caused the bulk of emergency room-treated injuries. Sparklers can burn at temperatures exceeding 1200 degrees Fahrenheit!

Below is information regarding how to use fireworks safely and legally.

SAFETY TIPS FOR USING FIREWORKS

The Consumer Product Safety Commission and the National Council on Fireworks Safety offer the following safety tips:

- Always read and follow label directions.
- Have an adult present.
- Buy from reliable, established sellers.
- Use outdoors only.
- Always have water handy (a garden hose and a bucket).
- Never experiment or make your own fireworks.
- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never re-light a "dud" firework (wait 15 to 20 minutes and then soak it in a bucket of water).
- Never give fireworks to small children.
- If necessary, store fireworks in a cool, dry place.
- Dispose of fireworks properly by soaking them in water and then disposing of them in your trashcan.
- Never throw or point fireworks at other people.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- The shooter should always wear eye protection and never have any part of the body over the firework.
- Stay away from illegal explosives.
- Use legal fireworks only.

In Michigan, certain fireworks are legal and the public may purchase them without a permit. Certain other kinds of fireworks, however, are illegal or require special permits that allow pyrotechnic experts to do the spectacular public fireworks displays that we enjoy at fairs and special occasions. The State Fire Marshal has prepared the following list that makes it easy for consumers to distinguish between legal and illegal fireworks.

LEGAL FIREWORKS (No permit required):

- **Flat paper caps** - containing not more than .25 of a grain of explosive content per cap.
- **Toy noise makers** - toy pistols, toy cannons, toy canes, toy trick noise makers, and toy guns in which paper caps are used.
- **Sparklers** - containing no more than .0125 pounds of burning portion per sparkler.
- **Flitter sparklers** - in paper tubes not exceeding 1/8 inch in diameter.
- **Cone and cylinder fountains** - emits showers of sparks.
- **Toy snakes** - not containing mercury and packed no more than 12 per box.
- **Toy smoke devices.**

Fireworks that do not fit the above exceptions are illegal for sale, use, or transportation without a permit. Violators are guilty of a misdemeanor.

EXAMPLES OF ILLEGAL FIREWORKS/EXPLOSIVES IN MICHIGAN (THIS LIST IS NOT ALL-INCLUSIVE):

- **Cherry Bomb** - A small red sphere approximately 1" in diameter.
- **Comet (or Mine)** - A cylinder containing a star and attached to a wooden base. Upon ignition, the star is thrust 50-100 feet in the air and continues to glow as it falls to the ground.
- **Firecracker** - A small noisemaking cylinder up to 1.5" in length, often strung together with a fuse.
- **M-80** - Up to 2" in length, usually a red cylinder with a fuse coming out the side. This is not a firework; it is a federally banned explosive.
- **Bottle Rockets** - A cylinder, frequently topped by a cone to stabilize its flight, attached to a long stick.
- **Roman Candles** - A 6-12" tube containing alternating layers of compacted black powder that shoots single stars out of the top when lighted.
- **Silver Salute (M-100)** - A silver cylinder with a fuse coming out of the side containing large quantities of flash powder. This is not a firework; it is a federally banned explosive.
- **M-250 and M-1000 (quarter-stick)** - Large versions of the M-80 and M-100 that have extremely high risk factors for crippling and disfiguring injuries. This is not a firework; it is a federally banned explosive.
- **Torch** - A 6-12" tube filled with colored material and ending in a handle. When ignited, streams of colors come out of the top of the tube.
- **Wheel-type Device** - A firework that spins or twirls is a "wheel" and thus is neither a "cylindrical fountain" nor a "cone fountain."

Note that civic groups, organizations, and other private parties planning to acquire and display commercial-grade fireworks (also known as Class 1.3 Explosives or Class B Fireworks) will require a permit from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). See http://www.michigan.gov/documents/ATFRelease4-03_65204_7.pdf for more information about the ATF requirements. Commercial-grade private fireworks displays in Michigan also require a permit from the local government unit where the proposed display will be conducted.

If you are traveling, you should know that five states ban all consumer fireworks: Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. Six states allow only sparklers and/or other novelty items: Arizona, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, and Vermont.

If questions, consumers may contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at:

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