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Practice Fireworks Safety This Fourth of July

Wisconsin Optometric Association's member doctors urge citizens to protect their eyesight this 4th of July

Madison, WI – The Fourth of July is a widely celebrated holiday among citizens, and much of the excitement generated for this national holiday is due to the novelty and fun we enjoy while using fireworks. Despite enjoyment of such festivities, however, we must not forget the danger that fireworks may pose to our eyes and to our vision. During this year's Fourth of July holiday, the [Wisconsin Optometric Association \(WOA\)](#) urges all citizens to exercise caution and safety when enjoying the spectacle of using fireworks.

Eye injuries are the second most common injury resulting from the improper use of fireworks. According to a 2009 [special study](#) conducted by the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#), an estimated 1,600 fireworks-related eye injuries were treated. This accounted for 27 percent of all fireworks-related injuries in that study. While fireworks-related injuries typically result in burns to other parts of the body, contusions, lacerations and foreign bodies in the eye were the most common eye injuries.

Children under the age of 15 accounted for 39 percent of all fireworks-related injuries, according to the CPSC study. Topping the list of causes were sparklers, a favorite among children.

"As adults and parents, we must take the reins in promoting the safe use of fireworks to everyone within our circle of family and friends," advises current WOA President and Green Bay area optometrist Dr. Lisa Slaby. "As an eye doctor, I have seen firsthand the devastating results of firework-related accidents to the eye. Most of these injuries could have been avoided."

The purchase and use without a permit of some consumer fireworks is legal in Wisconsin. However, the WOA reminds all citizens that no private use of fireworks is without risk and, therefore, urges family and friends to attend fireworks displays conducted by professionals. If you do choose to use fireworks this Fourth of July, the WOA encourages you to follow these safety guidelines:

- *Use protective eyewear when handling fireworks.
- *Keep in mind that only adults should handle fireworks. Tell children they should leave the area immediately if their friends are using fireworks.
- *Never use fireworks in a partially or fully enclosed area; light fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from houses, dry leaves or grass and other flammable materials.
- *Keep a bucket of water on hand in case of a malfunction or fire.
- *Never try to reignite fireworks that malfunction; get rid of malfunctioning fireworks properly by soaking them in water and then dispose of them in your trashcan.
- *Never shoot off fireworks in metal or glass containers, as these materials can explode and release shrapnel.

If an accident does occur, minimize damage to the eye and potentially help save a person's sight by following these guidelines:

- Seek medical attention immediately, even for seemingly mild injuries. "Mildly" damaged areas can worsen and end in serious vision loss or even blindness.
- Shield the eye from pressure. Tape or secure the bottom of a foam cup, milk carton or similar shield against the brow, cheek and bridge of the nose.
- Do NOT rub the eye or apply pressure. If any eye tissue is torn, rubbing might cause more serious damage.
- Do NOT attempt to rinse out the eye. This can be even more damaging than rubbing.
- Do NOT give aspirin or ibuprofen (or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) to try to reduce the pain. These medications thin the blood and might increase bleeding.
- Do NOT apply ointment or any medication without consulting an eye doctor.

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 631 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at www.woa-eyes.org.