

### **PRACTICE FIREWORKS SAFETY THIS FOURTH OF JULY**

*The Wisconsin Optometric Association's member doctors urge citizens to protect their eyesight this 4<sup>th</sup> of July*

**MADISON, WI** – The Fourth of July is a widely celebrated holiday among the nation's citizens, and a huge part of that celebration centers on the novelty and fun we enjoy while using fireworks. As we celebrate the 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 member doctors of the **Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA)** urge all citizens to exercise caution and safety when enjoying the spectacle of using fireworks, sparklers and other devices.

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 - <http://www.cpsc.gov/>), an estimated 1,600 fireworks-related eye injuries were treated during that year. This accounted for 27 percent of all fireworks-related injuries as recorded in the CPSC study. While fireworks-related injuries typically result in burns on other parts of the body, contusions, lacerations and lodged foreign bodies were most common in terms of fireworks damage done to the eye.

Of significant concern in this study, results showed children under the age of 15 accounted for 39 percent of all fireworks-related injuries. Topping the list of injury causes were sparklers, a favorite among children and generally thought to be reasonably safe in the minds of many parents and adults. In addition, children and young adults under 20 years of age accounted for 54 percent of all estimated injuries caused by fireworks. The commonality between these statistics is that the young, who tend to be especially attracted to the spectacle of using fireworks, are suffering the greatest negative impact as a result.

"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 Wausau optometrist Dr. Jeff Sarazen. "As an eye doctor, I have seen firsthand the devastating results of fireworks-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 remind all citizens that no private use of fireworks is completely without risk, and therefore, urges citizens to attend fireworks displays conducted by professionals. If you do choose to use fireworks this Fourth of July, please follow common sense safety guidelines, such as: use protective eyewear, provide adult supervision to children at all times, instruct children to leave the area immediately if their friends are using fireworks without adult supervision, always light fireworks outdoors, never shoot off fireworks in metal or glass containers as these materials can explode and release shrapnel, and always keep a bucket of water on hand in case of a malfunction or fire.

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 a licensed 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 650 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed and certified to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. The WOA also maintains an affiliation with the American Optometric Association (AOA). For more information, visit WOA's Web site at [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).*