

## PRACTICE FIREWORKS SAFETY WHILE CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY

*Avoid fireworks-related injuries to the eye, especially in children*

**MADISON, WI** – The Fourth of July is a widely celebrated national holiday, often accompanied by the novelty of fireworks. As we celebrate our nation's independence, however, it's important to be aware of the danger that fireworks may pose to vision and eye health. Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) members urge all citizens to exercise caution and safety when fireworks are present during this year's Fourth of July holiday celebrations.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, or CPSC (<http://www.cpsc.gov/>), an estimated 11,400 fireworks-related injuries were treated in 2013, up nearly 3,000 from the previous year. In a study of fireworks-related injuries conducted by CPSC staff from June 21-July 21, 2013, 65% of such injuries occurred in the month surrounding July 4<sup>th</sup>. Contusions and lacerations to as well as lodged foreign bodies in the eye occurred frequently. Of concern, children and young adults under 20 years of age accounted for more than half (50 percent) of all estimated injuries caused by fireworks, and approximately 40 percent of children under the age of 15 suffered injuries. Prevalent on the list of injury causes were sparklers, a favorite among children generally thought to be reasonably safe in the minds of many adults. Regarding gender, males comprised a greater percentage of reported injuries at 57% compared to 43% of reported fireworks-related injuries to females. Note: CPSC releases fireworks-related injury statistics approximately one year after each study is conducted; further data from the survey can be found at <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/Fireworks/>.

"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 Sturgeon Bay, WI optometrist Dr. Eric Paulsen. "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."

WOA members remind all citizens that no private use of fireworks is completely without risk, and urge Wisconsinites to attend fireworks displays conducted by professionals. If you do choose to use fireworks this Fourth of July, please follow common sense safety guidelines; provide adult supervision to older children at all times, instruct children to leave the area immediately if friends are using fireworks without adult supervision, do not allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks, never shoot off fireworks in metal or glass containers (as these materials can explode and release shrapnel), never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not ignited fully, 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/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 630 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](http://www.woa-eyes.org).*