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## **PROTECT YOUR EYES AND ATTEND PROFESSIONAL FIREWORKS DISPLAYS**

***This year for the 4th of July celebrations, the American Optometric Association (AOA) suggests that families and friends stay away from private firework use and instead enjoy professional displays to protect and preserve eyesight.***

July 1, 2008 — This year for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations, the American Optometric Association (AOA) suggests that families and friends stay away from private firework use and instead enjoy professional displays to protect and preserve eyesight.

Each year over the holiday, thousands of adults and children are seriously injured as a result of fireworks and pyrotechnic devices. Many burns and injuries affect eyesight, permanently damaging and in some cases blinding the victims.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), during the 2005 calendar year (the most recent year statistics were available), fireworks were involved in an estimated 10,800 injuries that were treated in U. S. hospital emergency departments. The CPSC reports approximately 1,600 cases were eye injuries. Most of these eye injuries were contusions and lacerations.

Believe it or not, sparklers are the highest cause of fireworks injuries requiring trips to the emergency room. Sparklers can easily burn children since they heat up to 1800 degrees (hot enough to melt gold.)

And, surprising to many, bystanders are not safe from injury. Data from the United States Eye Injury Registry shows that bystanders are injured by fireworks one-half of the time.

About two-thirds of the fireworks-related injuries were burns, and most of the burns involved the hands, **eyes** and head/face. Nearly half (45%) of the victims were under 15 years old, and twice as many males were injured as females.

Be safe and protect your eyes this 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Go to professional displays and enjoy the spectacle in the sky.

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