

Don't Let A Fireworks Mishap Happen This Fourth Of July

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O'FALLON – Though fireworks can be exciting, festive and fun and we all are looking forward to being able to gather again for the Fourth of July holiday, the emergency department team at HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital wants to remind community members that fireworks can also be very dangerous.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports on average, 180 people go to the emergency room every day with fireworks-related injuries in the month around the Fourth of July holiday. An estimated 57% of injuries are burns.

“Firework injuries most often affect someone’s hands or fingers, legs, face and eyes,” said Dr. Jeffery Shafer, emergency and EMS medical director at St. Elizabeth’s. “While we want people to enjoy the holiday, we recommend that fireworks be left to the experts who are specially trained and certified to handle them so that everyone can stay safe.”

If you do decide to use fireworks, the following practices can help keep you safe:

1. Make sure fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them.
2. Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks. Young children can suffer injuries from sparklers, which burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees – hot enough to melt some metals. As a safe alternative to sparklers, use glow sticks.
3. Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
4. Never place any part of your body directly over a firework when lighting the fuse. Back up to a safe distance immediately after lighting a firework (only light one at a time).
5. Never carry fireworks in a pocket or shoot them from metal or glass containers.
6. Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not ignited fully.
7. Soak all spent fireworks in a bucket of water before throwing them in the trash can. Never discard fireworks, including used ones, in a fire pit.
8. Avoid buying fireworks packaged in brown paper. This is often a sign they were made for professional use only.

More fireworks safety tips are available on the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website at [cpsc.gov/fireworks](https://www.cpsc.gov/fireworks).

If you or someone you know is injured by a firework and in need of emergency care, call 911 or visit your nearest emergency room immediately. The HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital emergency department, 1 St. Elizabeth's Blvd. in O'Fallon, IL, is well-prepared to deliver high-quality emergency medical care 24/7, in the safest way possible.