

Hillsdale County Sheriff's Department

Sheriff Stanley Burchardt

Undersheriff Roger Boardman

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HAVE A HAPPY, AND SAFE, INDEPENDENCE DAY

Enjoying fireworks displays at dusk is synonymous with Fourth of July celebrations; however, Hillsdale County Sheriff Stan Burchardt wants to remind area residents fireworks can be deadly.

Last year US hospital emergency rooms treated more than 8,700 people for fireworks related injuries and children under the age of 15 account for one-third of those injuries. Fifty-seven percent of those injuries were burns, 30% of those injured were under 15 and 74% of those injured were male. In Michigan, a Melvindale mother of three was killed on July 4, 2007 after being struck by a commercially made firework.

In addition to injuries, fireworks caused more than 17,800 reported fires, including 1,200 structure fires, 400 vehicle fires and 16,300 outdoor fires. These fires resulted in eight reported civilian deaths, the death of one firefighter, 40 civilian injuries and \$32 million in property damage.

Sheriff Burchardt provides the following guidelines to minimize injuries when putting on at-home fireworks displays.

- Obey the local laws and USE COMMON SENSE. Michigan law allows local units of government with 50,000 or more residents to prohibit fireworks from 12:00 a.m. until 8:00 a.m. on the day before, day of and day after a national holiday. Smaller communities may prohibit use between 1:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.
- Read the fireworks instructions and follow them. If an item looks damaged, do not attempt to use it.
- Purchase fireworks only from reputable established dealers. Legal fireworks are tested as to quality and safety. Never attempt to build your own fireworks.
- A responsible adult should supervise all fireworks usage. Children should watch, but not handle fireworks.
- Fireworks are meant to be used one at a time. Do not attempt to combine or mix fireworks at the same time. Fuses have different burn rates. Actions like this invite accidents.
- Use fireworks outdoors away from structures, vehicles and trees.
- Fireworks should never be pointed or thrown at anyone. Make sure people and animals maintain a safe distance from the fireworks which are being set off. Use them only outdoors, and away from houses and vehicles.
- Alcohol and fireworks do not mix.
- Caution is important. Use protective eye wear and keep a water hose nearby. Don't try to re-light a dud, but soak it in water for 15 minutes and dispose of properly.

- Never place any part of your body directly over a firework when lighting the fuse.
- After fireworks complete their burning, douse the spent device with plenty of water before discarding.
- Keep pets inside. July 4th is the day with the most reports of lost pets each year.

Let's make this Fourth of July a safe holiday! For more information visit the National Council on Fireworks Safety online at <http://www.fireworksafety.org/>.