

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness
Monica Saenz Guerrero
Phone: (713) 526-2559, Ext. 106
msaenz@preventblindnesstexas.org

**Prevent Blindness Urges Public to Celebrate Independence Day
Safely, Leave Fireworks to Competent Licensed Operators in
Authorized Displays Only**

- An Estimated 19 Percent of All Fireworks Injuries Are To the Eyes -

Houston, TX (June 16, 2016) – According to the latest data from the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#), nearly 7,000 Americans spent part of their Fourth of July holiday in the emergency room in 2014 due to fireworks injuries. And, 19 percent of those injuries were to the eyes.

Burns were the most common injury to all parts of the body, except the eyes, where contusions, lacerations, and foreign bodies in the eyes occurred more frequently. According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), approximately one third of eye injuries from fireworks result in permanent blindness.

The CPSC also stated that children younger than 15 years of age accounted for approximately 35 percent of the estimated 2014 injuries. And, children 5 to 9 years of age had the highest estimated rate of emergency department-treated fireworks-related injuries.

Firecrackers and rockets are unpredictable. Some explode prematurely and rockets can take different flight paths than expected. Sparklers can burn up to 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit.

To help keep consumers safe during the Fourth of July holiday and throughout the year, Prevent Blindness supports the development and enforcement of bans on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks and sparklers, except those used in authorized public displays by competent licensed operators. The group works with leading organizations to educate the public on the dangers of consumer fireworks and endorses legislation to help protect adults and children from needless injuries from fireworks.

“Independence Day should be spent celebrating our great country with family and friends, not in the emergency room,” said **Debbie Goss, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness**. “We want everyone to be safe by leaving the fireworks to the professionals.”

According [to data from the United States Eye Injury Registry](#), the largest proportion of injured persons from fireworks were bystanders, not the person actually igniting the firework. Prevent Blindness urges the public to attend only authorized public fireworks displays conducted by licensed operators, but to also be aware that even professional displays can have accidents as well, and all those attending should always be extra cautious.

If an eye accident does occur, minimize the damage to the eye:

- **Do not** rub the eye. Rubbing the eye may increase bleeding or make the injury worse.
- **Do not** attempt to rinse out the eye. This can be even more damaging than rubbing.
- **Do not** apply pressure to the eye itself. Holding or taping a foam cup or the bottom of a juice carton to the eye are just two tips. Protecting the eye from further contact with any item, including the child's hand, is the goal.
- **Do not** stop for medicine! Over-the-counter pain relievers will not do much to relieve pain. Aspirin (should never be given to children) and ibuprofen can thin the blood, increasing bleeding. Take the child to the emergency room at once - this is more important than stopping for a pain reliever.
- **Do not** apply ointment. Ointment, which may not be sterile, makes the area around the eye slippery and harder for the doctor to examine.

For more information on the dangers of fireworks, please call Prevent Blindness at 1-888-98-SIGHT or visit www.preventblindnesstexas.org or log on to preventblindness.org/prevent-eye-injuries-fireworks.

About Prevent Blindness Texas

Founded in 1956, Prevent Blindness is the state's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness Texas touches the lives of thousands of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the Texas public. Through a network of regional offices and volunteers, we are committed to eliminating preventable blindness in Texas. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-888-98-SIGHT or, visit us on the Web at preventblindnesstexas.org or www.facebook.com/preventblindnesstexas or www.twitter.com/pbtexas.

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