



Department
of Commerce

NEWS RELEASE

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

STATE FIRE MARSHAL ENCOURAGES SAFETY WHEN USING LEGAL FIREWORKS

In an effort to reduce the number of fires and fireworks-related injuries, the Division of State Fire Marshal encourages Ohioans to attend public fireworks displays hosted by local municipalities and licensed exhibitors this July 4th holiday.

“The best way for Ohioans to prevent fireworks injuries is to attend a licensed, professional fireworks exhibition,” said State Fire Marshal Larry Flowers. “Keep in mind that even trick and novelty fireworks, like sparklers, are inherently dangerous and can cause serious injury.”

The only types of fireworks that can be legally purchased and discharged in Ohio are trick and novelty devices. These include items that smoke, sparkle, snap and snake. For those who choose to have their own display using these legal fireworks, Marshal Flowers encourages Ohioans to follow some important safety tips:

- Handle and discharge trick and novelty devices only under adult supervision.
- Appoint one adult to be in charge. This person should know the hazards of each type of firework being used.
- Carefully read and follow the label directions on the trick and novelty device packaging.
- Light only one sparkler at a time and hold it away from your body and others.
- Sparkler wires, which can burn up to 1800 degrees, should immediately be placed in a bucket of water to avoid injury as they remain hot for a few minutes after burnout.
- If someone gets burned, run cool water over the wound for two or three minutes and seek medical attention when necessary.

Other fireworks, like those sold at fireworks stores around Ohio, can be legally purchased in the state, but you must agree to take them out of Ohio to discharge. “You must be at least 18 years of age to buy items such as firecrackers and bottle rockets at the stores you see along the roadways of Ohio,” said Flowers. “But firing them off within state boundaries is prohibited.”

There are stiff penalties for the illegal possession or discharge of fireworks. It is a first-degree misdemeanor for non-licensed individuals to discharge fireworks in Ohio, to falsify an application when purchasing fireworks, or to possess them for more than 48 hours without taking them out-of-state. First-time offenders are subject to up to a \$1,000 fine and six months imprisonment.

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2011 Fireworks Frequently Asked Questions

What types of fireworks can be legally discharged in Ohio?

Trick and novelty fireworks include items such as sparklers, snaps, glow snakes and smoke bombs. In general, these can be sold in Ohio and used in the state. But check with your local community which may have its own rules preventing these from being sold or used.

Are any fireworks completely safe?

Firecrackers and sparklers cause the most injuries. Severe burns, injuries to the hands, eyes and face, and even blindness or hearing loss can happen anytime something is burned. For example, legal sparklers burn at up to 1800°, hot enough to melt gold. Severe burns happen every year. In addition, puncture-type injuries to an eye are common. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a show by a licensed exhibitor.

What types of fireworks are illegal to discharge in Ohio without a license and permit?

1.3G Fireworks

Display or exhibitor fireworks include aerial shells that are fired from mortars. They can only be sold by a licensed manufacturer, wholesaler, or, under limited circumstances, out-of-state shippers. They can only be sold to a licensed manufacturer, wholesaler or exhibitor. 1.3G fireworks can only be discharged by a professional, licensed exhibitor. These fireworks can only be discharged by a licensed exhibitor in accordance with Ohio laws regarding exhibitions, including a properly issued exhibition permit issued by the local fire and police departments.

1.4G Fireworks

Commonly referred to as consumer fireworks, these include firecrackers, bottle rockets, roman candles and fountains. A license is needed to sell these, but anyone over the age of 18 may purchase these items, but must sign a form certifying they will take the fireworks outside the state of Ohio within 48 hours. It's illegal to set them off in Ohio.

How many fireworks stores are in Ohio?

There are 42 licensed wholesalers in Ohio. There are also six (6) licensed manufacturers which may manufacture and sell fireworks. There is currently a moratorium preventing the issuance of any new sales licenses.

What is a purchaser form?

If you buy fireworks in Ohio, you have to sign a purchaser form certifying you will take the fireworks out of state within 48 hours. Purchasers are responsible for illegal use of the fireworks, including any damages. Making a false statement on the form is a first-degree misdemeanor. The purchaser's copy of the form must accompany the fireworks, be attached to an invoice itemizing the quantity of fireworks purchased, the amount of the sale, and made available upon request by a law enforcement officer or fire authority.

Are there penalties for failing to follow Ohio's fireworks laws?

Yes. Most first time violations are first-degree misdemeanors, punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail. Illegal fireworks can be confiscated by law enforcement authorities.

Violations include falsifying the purchaser form, failing to complete the form, failing to transport fireworks out of state within the specified time period, and discharging fireworks.

How many injuries result from fireworks use?

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports 9,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms for fireworks-related injuries in 2009. Children under the age of 15 accounted for more than 39% of the injuries. Over the past three years, the Division of State Fire Marshal has conducted 65 fireworks investigations and made 19 arrests. Included among these investigations were 18 Ohioans who suffered serious fireworks-related injuries.

How does the State Fire Marshal promote fireworks safety in Ohio?

The Department of Commerce actively reviews and works to increase fireworks safety, both in showrooms and for public exhibitions. The Department focuses on the regulation and education of the fireworks industry and those involved in the exhibition of fireworks.

The Division of State Fire Marshal operates a Fireworks Incident Team (FIT) to respond to the scene of any fireworks accident to investigate and assist local authorities. Investigations by FIT have led to both administrative and criminal action being taken against exhibitors who fail to follow the regulations.

What is the process for fireworks exhibitions?

A permit from local authorities is required for all exhibitions. The permit specifies the date, time, location and various other parameters of how the exhibition will be executed. Authorities inspect the exhibition site before, during and after the exhibition using a State Fire Marshal issued checklist. Only licensed fireworks exhibitors can perform fireworks exhibitions. During the shoot, only registered employees and the certified fire safety official are allowed within the discharge site.

Only licensed fireworks exhibitors can perform fireworks exhibitions. There are approximately 504 exhibitors in Ohio. All employees of exhibitors must be registered with the State Fire Marshal. There are about 1,240 registered assistants of licensed exhibitors. Exhibitors must undergo six hours of training on fireworks laws and safety every three years, and must, in turn, relay that training to all employees annually.

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