

Fireworks most dangerous for eyes, kids, fires & pets

A little planning can ensure the delights of shooting Fourth of July fireworks don't turn into disasters.

"A spark or ember from any number of fireworks can injure eyes, burn skin and start fires. So using a little common sense is important," said ophthalmologist Rainna Bahadur, M.D., a partner at Eye Associates of the South. They have clinics with optical shops in Biloxi, Ocean Springs and Gulfport.

Even common sparklers can cause eye injuries and third-degree burns since their flame can be hotter than 1,200 degrees F and shed sparks. Children are, by far, the most likely age group to be injured by fireworks, according to the Mississippi Department of Insurance.

The fireworks sales season in Mississippi runs June 15 through July 5 and Dec. 5 through Jan. 2.

Although individual fireworks shooting sometimes is allowed on a few Mississippi Gulf Coast beaches, many municipalities and counties ban it. Check with your local, county or fire protection office to determine local laws, according to the insurance department. (Do not dial 911 for such information.)

If you or your children will shoot fireworks or be near them, wear goggles or wrap-around sunglasses to protect your eyes, suggested ophthalmologist Joel Knight, M.D., also a partner at Eye Associates of the South.

Or pick up a pack of basic safety goggles at any hardware store for as little as \$1 per pair, he added. If you need safety glasses or goggles for work or with vision correction for more frequent use, you may buy them at optical shops.

The American Academy of

Ophthalmology (AAO) reports that fireworks accidents can cause corneal abrasions, retinal detachment, rupture of the eyeball or blindness, often to bystanders.

Bahadur added that people need to be aware of eye safety year round. "One of the most important things to do for life-long healthy vision is to protect your eyes. Eye injuries are commonplace. They are a leading cause of visual loss or impairment."

If fireworks could be loud in your neighborhood, put pets in a



quiet room with the door closed with food and water to keep them from darting outdoors in fear. "More pets are lost on

Independence Day than any other day of the year," an insurance department report says.

The Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office publishes fireworks safety tips, including:

- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place (away from pilot lights or furnaces).
- Always have an adult present when shooting fireworks.

• After ignited and cooled, put used fireworks in a bucket of water and have a hose ready.

• Only use fireworks outdoors, away from homes, dry grass, and trees.

• Light only one item at a time and keep a safe distance.

• Never experiment or attempt to make your own fireworks.

• Never re-ignite malfunctioning fireworks.

• Never give fireworks to small children.

• Never carry fireworks in your pocket.

• Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.

To contact Eye Associates of the South, call (228) 396-5185 or visit www.2020view.com.