



GREEN TOWNSHIP FIRE & EMS

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Douglas J. Witsken, Fire & EMS Chief

**** Public Safety Advisory ****

For Immediate Release

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Fireworks an Avoidable Danger

GREEN TOWNSHIP – As we approach the annual Independence Day holiday, Green Township Fire & EMS strongly discourages the use of “consumer” fireworks. The term “consumer” leads many to think they are safe, but in reality there is no such thing as a “safe firework”. Whether they fly, explode, burn or emit sparks, all fireworks are dangerous. Most fire service professional organizations discourage the public from using fireworks.

In Ohio, the use of fireworks by unlicensed persons is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1000 and up to 6 months imprisonment. The only exceptions to this are for small smoke devices, sparklers, snaps and “snakes”. Specifically prohibited are bottle rockets, firecrackers, roman candles, flower pots, or any other fireworks that fly, burn or explode. Some people may think just because they can buy these devices in Ohio at roadside stands or stores that they are legal (and safe) to use. They are wrong.

Fireworks carry the potential for great bodily injury and property damage. Less expensive fireworks of the type that can be purchased in roadside stores often have less quality control than the ones made for professional exhibitors. This means the cheaper ones can vary in explosive power, or the burn time or ignition temperature of wicks may be unpredictable causing great danger in their use or even storage. Uncontrolled storage conditions or varying weather conditions may also affect performance.

Green Township Fire & EMS Chief Douglas J. Witsken commented; “People really do not realize how dangerous illegal fireworks are. They can explode early. The type that launch can tip over, fly in an unexpected direction or explode on the ground. Some burn longer than expected, meaning they are still burning when they land on something. People get a false sense of security because they use fireworks and nothing bad happens. But, when it does, it can lead to severe injuries or property damage. It’s hard to believe how many people use such an inherently dangerous and unpredictable product, and some even allow their children to do so.”

According to the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), in 2011 there were 17,800 fires attributable to fireworks, causing \$32 million in damage. The IAFC position

paper regarding fireworks can be viewed on the IAFC website at http://www.iafc.org/files/1ASSOC/IAFCposition_ConsumerFireworks.pdf.

The National Fire Protection Association is a leading authority on fire safety. They also have prepared safety information and guidance on fireworks, which can be viewed at <http://www.NFPA.org/safety-information/for-consumers/holidays/fireworks>.

Green Township Fire & EMS as well as the leading fire safety organizations recommend leaving the fireworks displays to the professionals and encourage everyone wishing to view fireworks this Independence Day to view shows conducted by properly trained and licensed exhibitors. Green Township will host such a display and a concert by Saffire Express at Kuliga Park on July 3rd, 2014. Please visit <http://www.greentwp.org> for complete information.

Have a safe and happy 4th of July!

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