



AMERICAN ACADEMY  
OF OPHTHALMOLOGY®



American Society Of  
Ophthalmic Trauma

## News Release

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## Nation's Ophthalmologists Issue New Advice This July 4th

*The American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Society of Ophthalmic Trauma urge the public to protect against fireworks injuries*

**SAN FRANCISCO** – July 1, 2020 – Every Fourth of July, families, friends, and communities come together throughout the country to view firework displays. And every year, we encourage the public to leave the fireworks to the professionals and go to a public display. At the same time, fireworks sales have spiked as much as 400 percent this year, according to news reports. The American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Society of Ophthalmic Trauma are concerned that trips to the hospital for fireworks-related injuries will mirror this spike in fireworks sales.

We remind the public that consumer fireworks are dangerous both to those who set them off and to bystanders. Here are the facts:

- The [US Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) reported 10,000 injuries and 12 firework-related deaths in 2019.
- A [2017 study](#) showed that 65 percent of people injured by fireworks are bystanders.
- An April 2020 study in [JAMA Ophthalmology](#), showed that an estimated 34,548 firework-related eye injuries occurred between 1999 and 2017, with approximately 65 percent occurring in children. The most common injuries were ocular burns, ocular foreign body, and conjunctival irritation. Most injuries occurred at home (75 percent) with consumer use of fireworks during the 4th of

July. Although all types of consumer fireworks are dangerous, bottle rockets caused the most severe injuries, such as ruptured globes.

There is significant variability among state and county laws regarding the use of consumer fireworks. Setting off fireworks at home is illegal in some states. For people in states in which it's legal, here's how to make sure your backyard celebration doesn't end in the ER:

- Don't pick up duds and misfires: Fireworks nearly cost an [Ohio firefighter his sight](#). He took all the right precautions for his backyard Fourth of July fireworks celebration. But a split-second decision to inspect a "dud" was almost fatal.
- Supervise children closely: Sparklers seem like harmless fun for the kids, but they are responsible for about 1,400 eye injuries each year. Even those tiny poppers or snappers can pose dangers.
- Wear protective eyewear: Ophthalmologists recommend American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-approved [protective eyewear](#). Stop by any hardware store and pick up some safety glasses for the entire family.

If you choose to attend a public display this year, wear a mask and practice social distancing. Also:

- Bystanders: When watching a professional firework show, stand at least 500 feet away
- Wear eye protection: all professionals and bystanders should wear eye protection that meets the standards set by ANSI.
- Alcohol: Young males are the most commonly injured group. Do not drink and set off fireworks.

If you suffer an [eye injury](#) from a firework:

- Seek medical attention immediately.
- Do not rub, rinse or apply pressure to your eyes.
- Do not remove any objects that are stuck in the eye.

### **About the American Academy of Ophthalmology**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons. A global community of 32,000 medical doctors, we protect sight and empower lives by setting the standards for ophthalmic education and advocating for our patients and the public. We innovate to advance our profession and to ensure the delivery of the highest-quality eye care. Our EyeSmart® program provides the public with the most trusted information about eye health. For more information, visit [aao.org](http://aao.org).

### **About the American Society of Ophthalmic Trauma**

The mission of the American Society of Ophthalmic Trauma (ASOT) is to improve ophthalmic trauma care across the casualty care continuum, including the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, and treatment of eye injuries with the goal of preserving sight. ASOT will accomplish this via active engagement and advocacy in education; policy development; trauma systems development and evaluation; enhancing preparedness for national disasters, emergencies, contingencies, and military conflict; advancement of evidence-based research; integrating and collaborating with other trauma organizations and systems of care; and by working with multidisciplinary colleagues, specialties, and subspecialties that affect ophthalmic trauma care. For more information, visit [theasot.com](http://theasot.com)