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**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REMINDS FLORIDIANS AND VISITORS TO BE SAFE
WHEN CELEBRATING WITH FIREWORKS THIS FOURTH OF JULY**

- Be safe while celebrating this Fourth of July -

OKALOOSA COUNTY - The Fourth of July is a time for celebration across the country and fireworks are a crowd favorite each year. While fireworks can be fun to watch, they can also be very dangerous. The Florida Department of Health (DOH) reminds everyone that fireworks, including sparkers and flares, can cause serious burns as well as blast injuries that can permanently impair vision and hearing.

In 2009, an estimated 3,432 children ages 15 and under had injuries involving fireworks with most of these injuries occurring from the middle of June until the middle of July. Children and teenagers are the most likely people to be injured as a result of consumer fireworks. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 40 percent of the people injured by fireworks were under the age of 15. In Florida, nearly 60 children ages 15 and under went to the hospital for injuries involving fireworks in 2009.

“Do not let kids play with fireworks or sparklers,” says Lisa VanderWerf-Hourigan, Director of the Office of Injury Prevention at DOH. “The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to watch them at a community event where professionals handle them,” says Dr. Karen Chapman, M.D., Director at the Okaloosa County Health Department. DOH also recommends that adults never use fireworks when children are present.

The United States Fire Administration reminds everyone that sparklers can reach 2,000° Fahrenheit- hot enough to melt some metals. Do not allow kids to pick up pieces of fireworks after an event. Some may still be ignited and can explode at any time. Teach your children how to call 911 in an emergency. Also teach them what to do if their clothing catches on fire - ‘stop, drop and roll.

Where permitted by law, fireworks should be handled and used in strict accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions and all warning labels. For more information about fireworks safety and burn prevention, visit www.safekids.org.

Safe Kids Florida works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Its members include 17 local coalitions statewide in Florida. Safe Kids Florida is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Florida was founded in 1996 and is led by the Florida Department of Health-Office of Injury Prevention at www.doh.state.fl.state.us/injury.

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