



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Sheriff Joseph Underwood
Cass County Sheriff's Office

HAVE A HAPPY, AND SAFE, INDEPENDENCE DAY

Cassopolis -- Enjoying fireworks displays at dusk is synonymous with Fourth of July celebrations, however, Cass County Sheriff Joseph M. Underwood, Jr., wants to remind area residents fireworks can be deadly.

Last year more than 10,000 people were injured by fireworks, with children under the age of 15 accounting for one-third of those injuries. In Michigan, a Melvindale mother of three was killed on July 4, 2007 after being struck by a commercially made firework.

There are two classes of fireworks. Class B fireworks are manufactured for use in professional displays like the one put on by your city or township. These fireworks are illegal in the state of Michigan without a permit. Class C fireworks, however, are the kind commonly sold in stores for consumer use. Examples of Class C fireworks include paper caps, toy trick noise makers, sparklers, fountains, toy snakes, and toy smoke devices. These fireworks are legal for the public to purchase without a permit.

“If you are unsure whether your fireworks are Class B or Class C, follow this one simple guideline: If it makes a loud bang or leaves the ground, then it is illegal!” said Sheriff Underwood. “The most important thing you can do is to properly educate your family about fireworks and set a good example.”

Sheriff Underwood provides the following guidelines for the safe use of fireworks for at-home displays.

- Stay away from illegal explosives.
- Obey the local laws and USE COMMON SENSE.

- Read the fireworks instructions and follow them. If an item looks damaged, do not attempt to use it.
- Purchase fireworks only from reputable established dealers. Legal fireworks are tested as to quality and safety. Never attempt to build your own fireworks or use illegal explosives such as M-80's or "Cherry bombs".
- A responsible adult should supervise all fireworks usage. Children should watch, but not handle fireworks. When used properly, all fireworks can be safe.
- Fireworks are meant to be used one at a time. Do not attempt to combine or mix fireworks at the same time. Fuses have different burn rates. Actions like this invite accidents.
- Use fireworks outdoors only.
- Fireworks should never be pointed or thrown at anyone. Make sure people and animals maintain a safe distance from the fireworks which are being set off. Use them only outdoors, and away from houses and vehicles.
- Alcohol and fireworks do not mix.
- Caution is important. Use protective eye wear and keep a water hose nearby. Don't try to re-light a dud, but soak it in water for 15 minutes and dispose of properly.

Let's make this Fourth of July a safe holiday! For more information visit the National Council on Fireworks Safety online at <http://www.fireworksafety.com/>.

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