**Fourth of July Holiday Safety Tips**

Using fireworks on our nation’s birthday is as American as apple pie, backyard barbecues and parades on Main Street. And it is equally safe if a few common sense rules are followed, says Nancy Blogin, President of the National Council on Fireworks Safety. There's nothing patriotic about suffering injuries and having to go to the emergency room when everyone else is celebrating.

First and foremost, obey local laws. If fireworks are illegal where you live, don't use them. Even if they are legal in your area, keep fireworks out of the hands of minors. That includes unlit fireworks. Take children to public firework displays and seize the opportunity to discuss safety issues beforehand.

If you live somewhere that allows individuals to use fireworks, proceed with caution and use common sense. The National Council of Fireworks suggests the following precautions:

* Follow the directions on all fireworks, and don't use them for anything other than what they're intended for.
* Have a working fire extinguisher available.
* Don't attempt to alter nor combine fireworks products.
* Never use homemade fireworks.
* Report illegal explosives to the nearest fire or police department.
* When lighting fireworks, always have water handy. A hose is best, but a bucket will suffice.
* Spectators should remain a safe distance from the fireworks being lit.
* Whoever lights the fireworks must be sober, wear safety glasses, and keep clothing well away from the flame when lighting.
* Only light fireworks outdoors on a smooth, flat surface, away from all flammable materials including dry leaves and paper.
* Never try to relight fireworks that appear to be duds. Wait up to 20 minutes for a possible delayed ignition. Then if nothing happens, soak the firework in a bucket of water and dispose of it.
* Dispose of all firework materials by first soaking them in water before putting them in the trash.
* Keep sparklers away from clothing and other flammable materials.
* Parents should not allow young children to handle or use fireworks.
* Fireworks should only be used outdoors.