

Department of the Treasury

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms



ATF NEWS



DETROIT FIELD DIVISION

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SAFETY FIRST FOR JULY 4 CELEBRATION

Detroit--"The July 4th celebration with fireworks can *and should* be a safe and happy holiday if citizens observe a few simple precautions," stresses Michigan's chief investigator of explosives crimes. Michael W. Morrissey, Division Director for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) in Michigan is calling on the public to practice fireworks safety to ensure that the July 4 holiday is a celebration and not a tragedy.

"Buy fireworks from vendors who operate openly and welcome visits by fire departments and police," Morrissey recommends. "Don't buy from persons who approach you on the street. Too often they sell deadly, illegal explosive devices that may explode prematurely in your hand or pocket."

ATF investigates crimes committed with explosives; including the sale of illegal explosive devices with street names like "M80" and "quarter stick". The devices resemble firecrackers but are unstable bombs. Typically, they are cardboard tubes fitted with fuses and packed with explosive materials. Tubes are one to six inches long and a half-inch to an inch or more in diameter. Common colors are red, silver and brown. Prices range from less than \$1 each to whatever the traffic will bear. *These devices meet no safety standards.* Heat, shock or pressure can trigger an accidental detonation. All of the illegal devices -- from the smallest "M80" to the largest "quarter stick" -- have maimed and killed young children as well as adults. The public is urged to help expose traffickers of these illegal devices by calling the ATF hotline at **1-888-ATF-BOMB**.

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The illegal devices should not be confused with common fireworks - *legal in some states*. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regulates Class-C common fireworks. These fireworks contain a trace of pyrotechnic material, are labeled Class-C, identify the producer, and come with safety precautions. In 1999, hospital emergency rooms treated about 8,500 people for fireworks-related injuries. About 45 percent of the victims were children under age 15. Injuries over the last 3 years, however, were lower than they had been in previous years - a decrease of about one- third since 1994. *

The Michigan Penal Code (Fireworks Law - Act 328, P.A. 1931, As Amended) states that it is illegal to sell, possess, transport, or use fireworks in Michigan without a permit. Exceptions to the code are devices that can be legally used by consumers within the State of Michigan include flat paper caps, toy trick noisemakers, flitter sparklers, fountains, and toy snakes. ***Devices that make a loud bang, or leave the ground, spin or twirl are prohibited under state law.***

"The American flag, parades, and fireworks are all part of our tradition and celebration of independence during the July 4th holiday", states Morrissey. He encourages Michigan residents to ***enjoy the holiday and the tradition of fireworks activities by letting the professionals put on the displays.*** "There will be many fireworks displays across Michigan. Rather than risk the chance of an accident and serious injury to family and friends, just sit back and enjoy the show."

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This release, as well as valuable Fireworks Safety Tips and an Illegal Explosives Devices Information Sheet are available by visiting the ATF Detroit Field Division website @ <http://www.atf.treas.gov/field/detroit>

***NOTE:** 1999 fireworks injuries total provided by Consumer Product Safety Commission.

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