

Department of the Treasury

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms



# ATF NEWS



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## Fireworks Safety

**Washington**--"Americans who celebrate the Fourth of July with fireworks can have a safe and happy holiday by observing a few simple precautions," advises the nation's chief investigator of explosives crimes.

"First, make sure fireworks are legal in your State and can be set off in your city or county," said John W. Magaw, Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

"Buy fireworks from vendors who operate openly and welcome visits by fire departments and police," Magaw 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."

"On a personal level, the most important thing is to assume leadership among family and friends," said Magaw. "Make sure they are safe. Discourage foolishness with fireworks -- and never mix alcohol and explosives."

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regulates Class-C common fireworks that are legal in some States. These fireworks contain a trace of pyrotechnic material, are labeled Class-C, identify the producer, and come with safety precautions. CPSC reported that fireworks injured more than 7,500 people last year.\*

An unknown number of the injuries attributed to fireworks are caused by small illegal explosive devices with names like M-80, quarterstick, ashcan, and M-1000.

(more)

The devices traffickers tout as fireworks are actually small, unstable bombs that sometimes blow up in the hands of unwary buyers.

A typical illegal explosive device resembles a roll of coins with a fuse:

- is a cardboard tube filled with explosive material;
- is 1 to 6 inches long and up to 6 inches diameter;
- is red, silver, or brown in color;
- has green, red, or blue fuse;
- sells for \$1 to \$5 or whatever buyers will pay.

"Illegal explosive devices meet neither safety nor quality standards and usually are coated with explosive dust," said Magaw. "Friction, heat or a bump can cause them to detonate." Each year, ATF finds and destroys hundreds of thousands of the devices.

Why do people make and sell illegal explosive devices which can send them to prison for 10 years or could possibly result in homicide charges? "The devices cost pennies to make and sell for a dollar or more," said Magaw. "They are high-profit items."

"Caring citizens can play an important role in curbing the pain caused by illegal explosive devices," Magaw said. The Director urged the public to help expose traffickers of the illegal devices by calling the ATF hotline at 1-888-ATF-BOMB.

All explosives present a risk, including legal fireworks. ATF Investigates explosives incidents in cooperation with State and local enforcement agencies.

For more information on ATF, visit the ATF Web site listed below.

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Contact:  
CPSC for data on fireworks injuries, legal fireworks.

<http://www.atf.treas.gov>