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Fireworks Safety Month: Leave Fireworks to the Professionals

[ANN ARBOR] - Fireworks were involved in an estimated 10,800 injuries treated in U.S. hospitals during 2005, including 1,600 eye injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission's 2006 report.

In an effort to reduce these preventable injuries, Michigan Eye-Bank and Lions of Michigan encourage families to attend local public fireworks displays instead of using fireworks at home this Fourth of July. This recommendation is made as part of Fireworks Eye Safety Month sponsored by the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Attending a professional public fireworks display is a safe way to honor our nation.

People often do not recognize how dangerous fireworks can be when in an inexperienced hand. As many as 400 Americans lose vision in one or both eyes due to fireworks injuries. The risk of losing an eye is not worth the excitement of setting off fireworks. The CPSC notes that children under age 15 suffered 45 percent of the fireworks-related injuries reported in 2005, with the most common injuries being to the eyes, hands, head and face.

Although illegal fireworks, bottle rockets and Roman candles account for the majority of injuries, seemingly harmless sparklers also cause numerous injuries each year. Sparklers account for the most injuries to children under the age of five. Fascinated by the bright sparks, children find these sticks of fire - burning as hot as 1,800 degrees, hot enough to melt gold - irresistible to touch.

In order to promote eye health and the prevention of eye injury and disease, Michigan Eye-Bank offers a free eye disease and injury prevention kit geared towards early elementary school students and their families. To include this in your students' or child's curriculum, contact Michigan Eye-Bank at (800) 247-7250 or visit our Web site, www.michiganeyebank.org.

The Michigan Eye-Bank is a 501(c)(3), independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of sight. It recovers, evaluates and distributes human eye tissue for transplantation. It also supports research into the causes and cures of blinding eye conditions, promotes donation awareness through public and professional education, and provides humanitarian aid to people in need of corneal transplantation throughout the world.