

Revised Position Statement - 2022

Consumer Fireworks

Submitted by the Fire & Life Safety Section Board of Directors

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) adopts the position that the importation, sale, and use of all consumer fireworks including sparklers at the local, state, and federal level should be banned with the exception of professional public displays by licensed pyrotechnic operators. The IAFC supports and encourages collaborative efforts aimed at promoting public awareness education to eliminate the preventable social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and fire.

The devastating impact of consumer fireworks in our community: burn/trauma injuries are a frequent repercussion, with children and teens being injured at the highest rate.

A 2020 report¹ revealed an estimated 19,500 reported fires were started by the use of fireworks. Over the last decade, the injury and death rates from fireworks have continued to significantly increase. In 2020, there were at least 18 deaths from fireworks and 15,600 people treated for fireworks-related injuries in U.S. emergency rooms. Burns accounted for 44% of these injuries. The 2020 Consumer Product Safety Commission report states that consistently over the past 15 years that 66 – 75% of fireworks injuries occur from June 21 – to July 21: “Each year approximately 70% of the fireworks injuries in the U.S. occur during the month around July 4th.”

According to data in the June 2020 National Fire Protection Association Fireworks and Injuries report², fireworks-related fires resulted in \$105 million in direct property damage with brush, grass, and forest fires accounting for three of every five (59%) of all reported fires started by fireworks during the reported period.

Most of these injuries involved fireworks that federal regulations permit consumers to use.

Despite public perception, data proves there are no “safe and sane” fireworks. Sparklers, firecrackers, roman candles, and novelties accounted for nearly 40% of the fireworks injuries treated in emergency room hospitals in 2020.

Based on the above evidence, the IAFC supports:

- Changes to the Federal Hazardous Substance Act (FHSA) (Codified at 15 U.S.C. §§1261) prohibit the importation, distribution, and sale of all fireworks to consumers.
- Changes to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission rules would restrict the importation, distribution, and sale of all fireworks to consumers.
- Local, State, and Federal legislators are encouraged to adopt and preserve laws that restrict the availability of and sale of fireworks to consumers.

- In locations where fireworks are still being legally sold to consumers, the retail sale of these fireworks should occur in buildings that are fully equipped with an approved automatic fire sprinkler system that has been shown by large scale testing to mitigate a fireworks storage hazard.
- Encourage research in appropriate fire protection for fireworks storage hazards.
- The IAFC technical committee representatives with the ICC and NFPA (International Code Council and National Fire Protection Association) code development process shall advocate for the development of codes which may be adopted by communities for the permanent and temporary storage of fireworks based on sound research and data.
- Continue to encourage the public to attend sanctioned public fireworks displays rather than using consumer grade fireworks.
- Encourages leaders to utilize their networks or partnerships to leverage a collaborative approach on this important community safety issue. This isn't exclusively a fire service issue, and it definitely "takes a village" to address it! Fire service agencies should share this with other agencies and professionals they work with.
- Promote and assist with increasing public awareness on this issue and aid in providing essential prevention education, the following links offer free ready-to-use material: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/fire-causes-and-risks/Seasonal-fire-causes/Fireworks> and https://ameriburn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/fireworks_2-27-15.pdf.

The IAFC encourages fire service leaders to be assertive in their opposition to legislative attempts to legalize the use of consumer fireworks by the public. The fire service should be actively engaged in the effort to educate federal, state and local legislators and federal regulators, thus ensuring that these legislators and regulators fully comprehend the implications of the actions they take and how they impact the safety of the public and the emergency responders in their own communities.

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Approved by IAFC Board of Directors: 05 JUL 2022

¹Marty Ahrens, June 2020 *Fireworks Fires and Injuries*, National Fire Protection Association,

<https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/US-Fire-Problem/Fireworks-fires-and-injures>.

²Allison Marier, Blake Smith, Stephen Lee, June 2021, *2020 Fireworks Annual Report*, United States of America Consumer Product Safety Commission, https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/2020-Fireworks-Annual-Report.pdf?ZSdvk_ep9au0QsqraGl8S8_tA2LnAT7X.