



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Department of Health urges fireworks safety measures during New Year celebrations

HONOLULU – Fireworks displays to signal the start of the New Year are an annual tradition in Hawaii and worldwide. The Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) is reminding the public that the safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend public fireworks displays and leave the work to the professionals. For those who plan to use approved fireworks, exercise caution and follow important safety practices during the New Year celebration to prevent serious injuries.

“We urge the public to use extra caution and prevent needless injuries that can be caused by handling fireworks,” said Dr. Alvin Bronstein, chief of DOH’s Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch. “Each year, about 30 people in Hawaii are treated in emergency rooms for serious burns, breathing disorders and other fireworks-related injuries.”

The average number of fireworks-related injuries statewide have remained relatively stable following ordinances to regulate their use. Burns and difficulty breathing account for the majority of emergency room visits during the New Year.

During fireworks activity, people with asthma and respiratory problems are advised to stay indoors, turn on the air conditioner, avoid strenuous outdoor activities, drink plenty of fluids, and take medications as prescribed.

The department recommends the following safety measures when handling fireworks:

- Only use approved fireworks from a licensed retail outlet that posts its retail license;
- Never use fireworks while under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- Never allow children to handle fireworks;
- Read and follow the cautionary labels and directions to ensure safe handling and use;
- Use protective eyewear when lighting fireworks;
- Never light fireworks indoors. Only use them in outdoor areas away from people, buildings, power lines, and flammable material;
- Only light one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after lighting;
- Never ignite devices in a container, open or closed;

- Do not try to re-light or handle fireworks that have not worked properly;
- Soak unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding;
- Keep a bucket of water nearby or hose handy to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire; and
- Call 911 immediately in case of injury or difficulty breathing.

Data on fireworks injuries requiring medical attention are collected each year from Dec. 31 to Jan. 2 from the emergency departments of all 22 hospitals statewide, the health center in Hana and the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center.

DOH's Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch works to administer, maintain, and operate a statewide comprehensive emergency medical services system, which is designed to reduce medical emergency deaths, injuries, and permanent long-term disability through the implementation of a fully integrated cohesive network of related components. They also provide guidance for preventing death and disability associated with injuries in Hawaii by educating, supporting and mobilizing individuals and organizations to incorporate comprehensive injury prevention strategies in their daily activities.

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