

Fireworks red, white and blues

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Celebrating America on Independence Day is typically a holiday that we all look forward to, as we gather together with family and friends for a day of recreation and relaxation.

As has been the American tradition, we attend our county or city public fireworks displays where trained pyrotechnists set off a fireworks display that is literally choreographed to thrill us to our core — and we just sit back together, exclaiming our collective "oohs" and "ahhs" and enjoy the show.

In recent years this has drastically changed in Florida as there are now just about any kind of fireworks available to buy, as well as increased fire power, and people are setting off their own backyard displays, not knowing that these are illegal to use, unless, according to state law, for agricultural purposes — for example, scaring birds away from crops and fish hatcheries.

There are those who believe buying mortar-type rockets or exploding ground "sparkler" displays are safe and sane fireworks, yet the injury figures show they are neither, particularly to children.

When things go wrong, they typically go wrong very fast, far faster than any reactions of a parent whose child gets caught in the nightmare of a million screams when they become the unintended victim of a chemical burn. The intensity of the heat alone can be well over 1,000 degrees, melting flesh upon contact.

The National Fire Protection Association's most recently released data that states in 2006 there were 9,200 fireworks-related injuries requiring treatment in hospital emergency rooms. The highest number of injuries were sustained by children aged 10 to 14.

We should also consider animals, whether domestic or wild.

Animals cannot understand these friendly explosions going off around them; they panic, have heart attacks, or only know to flee blindly into the night.

Not only have dog and cat owners lost their beloved pets forever, but the larger animals, such as horses or cattle, will stampede and often suffer injuries that lead to permanent damage or death.

Animals don't "get over it" as many think, and the animal owners who have spent their hard earned money and countless hours of care suffer horribly as well as they stand helplessly watching in agony when things get out of control.

Please, we are all Americans and all of us deserve to celebrate our freedoms this Independence Day.

Know that there are those who want to celebrate their freedoms without fireworks explosions around their homes, properties, or animals — before, during, or after the Fourth of July. This great nation was not built on selfishness or careless attitudes.

Be compassionate, be safe, and above all, consider your fellow American.

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