



Position Statement

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 and sparklers at the local, state and federal level should be banned with the exception of authorized public displays by professional licensed operators. This is the only effective means of eliminating the preventable social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and damage.

The unnecessary devastating effect of consumer fireworks is clear; the largest impact on civilians is through injury with the highest injury rates being for children aged 10 to 14. In 2009, 8,800 fireworks-related injuries were treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms. The trend in fireworks-related injuries has been mostly in the range of 8,300 to 9,800 since 1996, except for spikes in 2000, primarily due to celebrations around the advent of a new millennium, and in 2004, and a sharp drop in 2008.¹

In 2009, an estimated 18,000 reported fires were started by fireworks. These fires resulted in no reported civilian deaths, 30 civilian injuries and \$38 million in direct property damage. The risk of fire death relative to exposure shows fireworks to be more risky per hour of use than cigarettes.

It also is clear that the fireworks problem is not due to illegal or homemade fireworks. In 2009, five out of six (84%) emergency room fireworks injuries involved fireworks that federal regulations permit consumers to use.

In addition, there are no "safe and sane" fireworks. Sparklers, fountains, and novelties alone accounted for 32 percent of the emergency room fireworks injuries in 2008.

Based on the above evidence, the IAFC supports:

- Changes to the Federal Hazardous Substance Act (FHSA) (Codified at 15 U.S.C. §§1261) to prohibit the importation, distribution and sale of all fireworks to consumers.

- Changes to the Consumer Product Safety Commission rules that would restrict the importation, distribution and sale of all fireworks to consumers.
- State and local legislators adopting and preserving laws restricting the sale of fireworks to consumers.
- In locations where fireworks are still being legally sold to consumers, the retail sale of these fireworks should only occur in buildings that are fully protected by a fire sprinkler system.
- The model codes organizations (International Code Council and National Fire Protection Association) should promulgate code/standard provisions that regulate the use of consumer fireworks for adoption in those jurisdictions that allow the use of consumer fireworks.

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: 22 August 2011

¹ All statistics in this position statement are taken from the report entitled "Fireworks" by John R. Hall, Jr., for the National Fire Protection Association, June 2011.