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CONSUMER ALERT

Georgia Eye Experts Urge Public to be Extra Cautious with Fireworks *Georgia Optometric Association Offers Tips to Celebrate the Holiday Safely*

ATLANTA, Ga. (July, 2022) – An extra-long Fourth of July weekend means more time to celebrate and more chances to suffer injuries from fireworks, experts say. Georgia eye experts are urging the public to be extra careful around fireworks during this year's long holiday weekend.

"It's been a long time since we've been able to go all out and celebrate the Fourth of July like we used to before the pandemic," says Dr. John E. Titak, newly elected president of the Georgia Optometric Association. "This year, 'Be Vision Smart'... and leave the fireworks to the pros!"

According to a June 2022 report by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), nine fireworks-related deaths were reported nationwide in 2021. Fireworks were involved in an estimated 11,500 injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms, including 8,500 alone that occurred during the one-month period around July 4. Most of the injuries that led to ER visits were associated with fireworks.

In 2021, the most commonly injured parts of the body were:

- Hands and fingers (31%)
- Head, face and ears (21%)
- Legs (15%)
- Eyes (14% or an estimated 1,200 injuries)
- Trunk/Unspecified (10%)
- Arms (8%)

(Based on CPSC estimates.)

The most common injuries to the eyes were burn and contusions/lacerations.

"The easiest way to prevent eye injuries is by attending professional firework displays and wearing safety glasses whenever you are near fireworks," says Dr. John E. Titak, who practices in Lake Oconee. "If an eye injury does occur, stay calm and seek immediate medical attention from a local doctor of optometry or the nearest emergency room."

"For best results, don't attempt to remove any objects or debris from the eye by yourself," Dr. Titak says. "Instead, cover the eye with something like a plastic or foam cup to prevent rubbing or touching the eye. Avoid using rinses, eye drops or ointments as they could make the problem worse."

To help prevent eye injuries during fireworks season, the GOA recommends the following tips to help protect and preserve eyesight during the Fourth of July holiday:

- Talk about fireworks safety with children and teens prior to the Fourth of July holiday.
- Do not allow kids to handle fireworks, and never leave children unsupervised near fireworks.
- Wear protective eyewear when lighting and handling fireworks of any kind.
- Store fireworks, matches and lighters in a secure place where children won't find them.
- Avoid purchasing sparklers. Heating up to 2,000 degrees or hotter, sparklers accounted for more than half of the total estimated injuries to children under age 5, according to the CPSC.
- Be aware of your surroundings and only light fireworks when family, friends and children are at a safe distance.

“If a firework-related eye injury does occur, always follow up with a full comprehensive eye exam,” says Dr. Titak. “A doctor of optometry will help ensure that the injury heals correctly and can monitor for potential future vision problems.”

To find an optometrist in your area, or for additional information on how best to protect your eyes during the Fourth of July holiday, please visit www.GOAeyes.com.

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The Georgia Optometric Association is a statewide professional organization representing over 700 doctors of optometry located in communities throughout the state of Georgia. Founded in 1904, the GOA and its members work to provide the public with quality vision and eye care services. For more information visit www.GOAeyes.com, or follow www.facebook.com/GeorgiaOptometricAssociation, [www.Twitter.com/GOA_eyes](https://www.twitter.com/GOA_eyes) and [www.Instagram.com/GOAeyes](https://www.instagram.com/GOAeyes).