



NEWS

ANTELOPE VALLEY'S
HEALTHCARE
NEWS RESOURCE

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ANTELOPE VALLEY HOSPITAL ENCOURAGES LEAVING FIREWORKS TO THE PROFESSIONALS

(LANCASTER, CA – June 17, 2008)— Thousands of accidents each year tell us that fireworks are dangerous. Over 9,300 fireworks-related injuries occur annually and nearly 2,000 of those result in eye injuries.

The typical victim is a teenager, at home, unsupervised, with a group of friends, playing with fireworks. The chances are great that one of them will end up in the emergency room with an injury to the head, eyes or hands. Injuring an eye or losing a finger is a tragic price to pay for a few minutes of fun with fireworks.

In an effort to reduce injuries, Antelope Valley Hospital is encouraging families to attend local public fireworks displays instead of using fireworks at home this Fourth. This recommendation is made as part of Fireworks Eye Safety Month sponsored by the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO). Attending a professional public fireworks display is a safe way to honor our nation and keep our kids safe.

“These injuries are senseless and preventable”, says Ira Opatowsky, MD, ophthalmologist at AV Eye Care and on-staff at Antelope Valley Hospital. “People do not recognize how dangerous fireworks can be when in inexperienced hands. As many as 400 Americans lose vision in one or both eyes due to fireworks injuries per year.”

Although illegal fireworks, bottle rockets and Roman candles account for the majority of injuries, seemingly harmless sparklers also cause numerous injuries each year. Sparklers account for the most injuries to children under the age of five. Fascinated by the bright sparks, children find these sticks of fire irresistible to touch. Sparklers are reported to burn between 1,800 and 2,000 degrees, hot enough to melt gold.

Dr. Opatowsky states, “I see children each year at AV Eye Care that have suffered corneal burns from sparklers. The safest way to view fireworks is to attend a professionally produced community sponsored fireworks display.”

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The AAO and Dr. Opatowsky recommend the following for firework safety this year:

- View displays from at least 500 feet away
- Respect safety barriers set up by pyrotechnicians
- Let trained professionals light the fireworks
- Don't touch unexploded fireworks

“Every year, we see many injuries in the emergency room due to fireworks. Many of these injuries could have been easily prevented by not handling fireworks,” said Edward Mirzabegian, AV Hospital Chief Executive Officer. “There are many local fireworks displays, including the ones at the AV Fairgrounds, JetHawks stadium or Palmdale High School. I urge you to go to these events and celebrate safely this Fourth of July!”

For more information on eye safety, visit the American Academy of Ophthalmology website at www.aaopt.org.

About Antelope Valley Hospital

Celebrating more than 50 years of caring for the community, Antelope Valley Hospital, a facility of Antelope Valley Healthcare District, is a non-profit, 420-bed hospital that was founded in 1955. The hospital is dedicated to providing quality care and services to everyone in the Antelope Valley. AV Hospital is located at 1600 West Avenue J in Lancaster, California. For further information, please visit www.avhospital.org or call 661-949-5000.

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