

# Fireworks in Minnesota: Facts and Safety Tips

**FACT:** The Minnesota law was changed in 2002 to legalize the possession and use of non-aerial, non-explosive fireworks. Immediately, the fireworks injury rate rose from 20 in 2001 to 92 in 2002 — and those are only the injuries reported by emergency rooms and other treatment facilities. They don't include the first- and second-degree burns treated at home. The group most affected by fireworks injuries is consistently children between 10 and 19 years of age.

**FACT:** “Non-aerial, non-explosive” means it won't fly or explode. If it goes airborne or blows up, it isn't legal in Minnesota. It's true that people buy illegal fireworks in neighboring states and use them here anyway — but it doesn't make it okay because you're firing them over the lake, or because the neighbors don't mind, or because the police are too busy to catch you. We're setting a poor example for our young people when we cherry-pick the laws we choose to obey. And using aerial, explosive fireworks always creates the risk of fire and injury.

**FACT:** In a typical year, more fires are reported in the U.S. on Independence Day than any other day of the year, and fireworks account for more than half those fires. (NFPA) Fireworks use is not banned solely because people injure themselves. They're also banned because of the fires they start, the cost of the destruction those fires cause, the risk to firefighters who have to respond to those fires, and the cost to the communities that support those fire departments. It's a much bigger issue than “I can take care of myself.” It's community-wide; it's statewide.

**FACT:** The types of fireworks that are legal in Minnesota account for about a third of emergency room visits for fireworks injuries nationwide. (NFPA) Consider this: We bake cakes at 350 degrees and won't let a child near the oven door. The tip of a burning sparkler, on the other hand, reaches temperatures in excess of 1200 degrees. People hand them to barefoot children and hope for the best.

**FACT:** From 2001 through 2010, Minnesotans lost about \$4.7 million in property to fireworks damage. Half of it took place in June and July. And that doesn't include a 2002, \$1.7 million wildland fire in the Brainerd area.

**The data above illustrate the need for safety precautions. There are no guarantees, but the following tips can minimize risk and make fireworks use as safe as possible.**

**SAFETY TIP:** Read and follow the instructions on each device. Make sure children using fireworks are supervised by sober, attentive adults.

**SAFETY TIP:** Choose a safe place to use legal fireworks, far from combustible materials or surfaces (furniture, siding, outdoor carpet, decking, etc.) that could be damaged or catch fire.

**SAFETY TIP:** Store fireworks in a cool, dry place. If fireworks get wet, don't attempt to dry them out and use them. Federal law prohibits taking them apart, experimenting with them, making your own or altering them before use.

**SAFETY TIP:** *NEVER* try to relight a “dud.” The injury rate on re-lighting fireworks that don't ignite is too high — just soak the piece in water and use a different one.

**SAFETY TIP:** Keep fireworks away from small children, and never allow older kids to point them or throw them at other people, animals, vehicles or anything else that could be damaged.

**SAFETY TIP:** Keep a bucket of water handy; put spent sparkler sticks and other leftovers from fireworks use in the water to cool before disposing of them.

**SAFETY TIP:** Never ignite fireworks inside a can, jar or other container.