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Chaney Urges Fireworks Safety

JACKSON – Mississippi Insurance Commissioner Mike Chaney, who also serves as State Fire Marshal, today recommended that residents exercise special caution when using fireworks over the upcoming Fourth of July holiday.

Over 10,000 people were seriously injured last year while using fireworks and information from the Consumer Products Safety Commission shows that burns were the most common injuries, accounting for more than half of the incidents. The parts of the body most often injured were hands (estimated 2,000 injuries), eyes (1,400 injuries) and legs (1,200 injuries). Over the last 10 years, there has been an upward trend in injuries and 11 deaths were reported in 2007, the same number as the previous year.

“The Fourth of July is a great American holiday,” Chaney said. “But too often the unsafe use of fireworks spoils what should have been a great family outing. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a show put on by professionals who are trained to handle fireworks.”

Here are some safety guides for using fireworks correctly:

- Observe local laws. Those wishing to purchase and use fireworks should first check with their local county and/or fire protection officials to determine that local laws are being followed. Some municipalities prohibit fireworks from being used within city limits. Additional zoning regulations prohibiting the use of fireworks may apply in non-municipal areas. If you are unsure whether it is legal to use fireworks in your area, first check with local officials.
- Use common sense and always read and follow the directions on each firework.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Buy from reliable fireworks sellers. Store them in a cool, dry place.

- Always have an adult present when shooting fireworks.
- Put used fireworks in a bucket of water and have a hose ready.
- Only use fireworks outdoors, away from homes, dry grass, and trees.
- Light only one item at a time and keep a safe distance.
- Never experiment or attempt to make your own fireworks.
- Never re-ignite malfunctioning fireworks.
- Never give fireworks to small children.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.

Injuries resulting from the use of fireworks have risen in recent years, according to the National Fireworks Eye Safety Campaign. The campaign, sponsored by the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the National Association of State Fire Marshals, encourages families to attend public fireworks displays in place of using fireworks at home this Fourth of July. Statistics show that:

- Of the approximately 7,000 fireworks-related injuries each year in the United States, approximately 1,400 are eye injuries caused by consumer fireworks. About one-third of these injuries result in permanent eye damage, and one-fourth in permanent vision loss or blindness. Almost one in twenty victims lose all useful vision, or require removal of the eye.
- One-fourth of all eye injuries caused by consumer fireworks are inflicted on bystanders.
- Three-fourths of all fireworks-related eye injuries are to boys between the ages of 13 and 15.
- The single most dangerous type of firework is the small, explosive, bottle rocket. Bottle rockets are the most dangerous because they fly erratically, causing bystander injuries. The bottles and cans used to launch them often explode, showering fragments of glass and metal.
- Sparklers, often given to young children, burn at 1800 degrees Fahrenheit, nearly hot enough to melt gold.

For more information, visit the National Association of State Fire Marshals' website at <http://www.firemarshals.org>.