



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Fourth of July Firework Safety Use Crucial During Extreme Drought**

JACKSON – Mississippi’s extreme drought conditions makes the use of fireworks on the Fourth of July no cause for celebration. At present, 8 counties and numerous municipalities have burn bans in place and many are prohibiting the use of fireworks. Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney urges all Mississippians choosing to celebrate the Fourth with fireworks to use extra care and caution in these dry conditions.

“In dry conditions such as we are experiencing now it doesn’t take very much to start a fire that can lead to a real disaster,” Chaney said. Based on the reports submitted to the State Fire Marshal’s Office reporting system by Mississippi’s fire departments responded to 48 fires started by fireworks from July 1- July 10, 2011.

According to the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) the drought index for most of the state is currently above 700 on a scale of 0-800, with 800 being the worst (driest). MFC also predicts the state will hit the 800 mark next week making conditions extremely favorable for outside fires.

A report from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA ) says that there are more fires in the United States on the Fourth of July than any other day of the year, and more than twice as many on any average day. Fireworks account for two out of five of those fires. In 2010,

fireworks caused an estimated 15,500 reported fires resulting in an estimated 8 civilian deaths, 60 civilian injuries and \$36 million in direct property damage.

Mississippians celebrating the Fourth of July with fireworks should also take extra care when children and teens are present. The greatest risk for injury involving the misuse of fireworks is for children 5-9 and teens 15-19. The NFPA states that these age groups are 2 ½ times more at risk than the general population.

Sparklers, which can reach up to 1200 ° Fahrenheit, fountains and novelties alone, according to the latest data, accounted for 32% of emergency room fireworks injuries.

“Be sure to use common sense when handling any type of fireworks and be especially cautious where young children are concerned,” Chaney said.

For those choosing to use consumer fireworks, the Mississippi State Fire Marshal suggests you follow these safety tips:

- 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.

There will be many professional fireworks displays open to the public throughout the state on the Fourth. Attending one of those and leaving fireworks in the hands of professionals is the safest way to celebrate the Fourth of July, the National Fire Prevention Association believes.

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