



For Immediate Release

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Chaney Stresses Caution with Fireworks, Parties and Clubs for Fire-Safe New Year

JACKSON – For Mississippians planning to host New Year’s Parties or head out to a restaurant or club to ring in 2014, Mississippi State Insurance Commissioner and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney stresses caution in celebrating in order to have a Fire-Safe New Year.

“This is a time for families and friends to get together for celebration, however everyone needs to be aware of the greater risk of fire when groups gather,” Chaney said.

“Be sure to use common sense when handling any type of fireworks and be especially cautious where young children are concerned as statistics show children ages 5-9 and teens 15-19 are 2 ½ times more at risk for injury,” Chaney said.

Sparklers, often a favorite with children, can reach up to 1200 ° Fahrenheit, which is hot enough to cause third-degree burns. Other fireworks products such as fountains and novelties, according to the latest data, accounted for 34% of emergency room fireworks injuries. There were an estimated 9,600 fireworks related injuries reported in 2011 by U.S. hospitals with nearly one-quarter (26%) of victims being under age 15.

Fires started by fireworks can get out of control very quickly Chaney added. In 2011, nationally, fireworks caused an estimated 17,800 reported fires resulting in an estimated eight reported civilian deaths, 40 civilian injuries and \$32 million in direct property damage.

Following these few simple tips from the Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office and the National Fire Protection Association can ensure a truly happy and fire-safe New Year celebration.

FIREWORKS: for those choosing to use consumer fireworks

- 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.

Hosting a New Year's Party or attending events at restaurants, clubs and other public venues

House parties

- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Provide deep ashtrays and wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.

Restaurants, clubs and other public assembly buildings

Before you enter

- Is the building in a condition that makes you feel comfortable? Is the main entrance wide and does it open outward to allow easy exit? Is the outside area clear of materials that may block exits?
- Have a communication plan. Identify a relative or friend to contact in case of emergency.
- Pick a meeting place outside to meet family or friends if there is an emergency.

Once inside

- Look for all available exits and be prepared to use the closest one.
- Make sure aisles are wide enough and not obstructed by chairs or furniture. Check to make sure your exit door is not blocked or chained.
- Are there fire sources such as candles burning, cigarettes or cigars burning, pyrotechnics, or other heat sources that may make you feel unsafe? Are there safety systems in place such as alternative exits, sprinklers, and smoke alarms?

During an emergency

- If an alarm sounds, you see smoke or fire, or other unusual disturbance, exit the building immediately.
- Once you are out, stay out. Under no circumstances should you ever go back into a burning building. Let trained firefighters conduct rescue operation.

Follow the Mississippi Insurance Department (@MSInsuranceDept) and the Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office (@msfiresafe) on Twitter® for additional fire safety tips during the holidays.

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