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Posted on Tue, Jul 3, 2012 : 6:34 p.m.

Homemade fireworks injuries surfacing during Fourth of July week

By Amy Biolchini

Though bottle rockets and Roman candles are now legal in Michigan (<http://annarbor.com/news/new-state-fireworks-law-doesnt-have-everyone-ooing-and-aahing/>), the thrill of the big bang still has left some residents to their own devices.

Reports of people injured after incidents with **homemade fireworks** came in Tuesday at **University of Michigan Health System**, and staff expects there to be dozens throughout the rest of the week and the weekend.

A person was admitted to the adult emergency room in U-M's **University Hospital** this week with major injuries from a homemade firework, said **David Stoll**, emergency department charge nurse.

The majority of the injuries were from metal shrapnel in an explosion, Stoll said.

"A lot of people make homemade explosives," Stoll said. "They fill a container with gunpowder and put metal pieces or BBs in it. Then they put it in something and try to blow it up."

Another admission to the emergency room this week was a person who was seriously burned after being hit by a homemade sparkler.

"Someone had taken steel wool and put muzzle loader propellant or something flammable on it and lit it on fire to make a huge sparkler," Stoll said.

A string had been previously tied to the steel wool, and someone was whipping the flammable bundle around in a giant circle above their head.

The fire burned through the string, and the flaming piece of steel wool flew into someone standing nearby, Stoll said.





Stoll, who has worked in the emergency room for the past decade, said there's always a rash of homemade firework-related injuries in the week surrounding **Independence Day**.

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commercial fireworks shows like those pictured here, some choose to make their own fireworks at home. Reports of injuries due to homemade fireworks have begun rolling in

from emergency room staff.

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He anticipated **several dozen** patients would be admitted throughout the week and over the weekend.

File photo | AnnArbor.com

A spokesman from **St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor** said they had not seen emergency room admissions Tuesday from homemade firework-related injuries.

Private individuals are allowed to build fireworks for their own use, though they are under stringent guidelines of the U.S. Department of Justice **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** (ATF) (<http://www.atf.gov/field/detroit/>)- a federal agency with local field offices in Michigan.

To discharge a firework on private property, the individual must obtain a license from the local governing body - a city or township.

Typical homemade fireworks consist of metallic salts for color, charcoal, sulfur and potassium nitrate. The shell is cardboard, and covered in glued paper.

The inclusion of metal into a homemade firework - like shrapnel and BBs - make it less of a firework and more of a dangerous explosive.

“Those that hurt people are more like an improvised exploding devices,” said **Bob Kesling**, president of the **Michigan Pyrotechnics Art Guild** (<http://www.mpag.org/index.shtml>). “People are in it for the bang, not for the art.”

The guild consists of manufacturers, hobbyists and interested consumers that meet about five times a year. Kesling, who lives in Ludington, has been building his own fireworks for the past 12 years.

“Any time you deal with explosives as a private individual, you get the rap as a non-sane individual,” Kesling said. “It does come with your backyard bomb-maker, and that’s not what we do.”

The Chapter 750 of the **Michigan Penal Code**

(http://www.annarbor.com/ATF_FederalExplosivesLawandRegulations.pdf) Federal Explosives Law and Regulations from the ATF

defines explosives as: **Any chemical compound mixture, or device, the primary or common purpose of which is to function by explosion; the term includes, but is not limited to, dynamite and other high explosives, black powder, pellet powder, initiating explosives, detonators, safety fuses, squibs, detonating cord, igniter cord, and igniters.** Homemade fireworks can be particularly dangerous when people mix different amounts of explosive materials together with no quality standards, said **Donald Dawkins**, public information officer for the Detroit field division of the ATF.

Those making their own fireworks “lack the knowledge and expertise” to craft them safely.

“They just want to hear a big bang,” Dawkins said. The ATF does not regulate consumer fireworks. Local law enforcement agencies are left to police homemade fireworks on a case-



by-case basis. states violators of the law face a felony charge punishable by up to five years in prison and/or a \$3,000 fine for possessing, delivering, sending, transporting or placing a device that is constructed to represent or is presented as an explosive, incendiary device or bomb.

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"I know these shows look fantastic, but there's so many things that could go wrong," he said.

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Comments

Douglas Hobart

Fri, Jul 6, 2012 : 10:51 p.m.

What 1 thing people should realize-what's legal? 1.4 consumers fireworks are now legal in the state of Michigan. 1.3 fireworks are still regulated by our federal goverment. Now, when you start talking about making fireworks that explode(your talking about making "bombs") and are not legal unless you have a manufactures high explosive license. These people that are hurting themselves are doing it illegally-throw the book at them. Investigate what happen and let the law do thier jobs.

Madeleine Borthwick

Fri, Jul 6, 2012 : 2:48 p.m.

ok, I'll probably get called every name in the book for saying this, but here goes anyway. Not everyone who shoots off fireworks is a numbskull. while I agree that homemade fireworks are dangerous to say the least, if one exercises a few *simple* rules it is possible to shoot off those bottle rockets without getting one's hand(s)blown off. To wit: 1) Make sure you're not aiming it at anyone's house, 2)light the thing, and 3)once it's lit, get the h*** out of the way and do not try to relight it. there will be the occasional dud. such is life. excuse me while I duck....

A2Frenchman

Thu, Jul 5, 2012 : 11:06 a.m.

twirling a firework over your head sounds like a great idea to begin with.....

WLD1

Thu, Jul 5, 2012 : 3:49 a.m.

If you wanna play, you may have to pay



just a voice

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Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 7:41 p.m.

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sounds like none of these problems came from the newly legal fireworks under the new law and are all related to other things. You are viewing this article from the Ann Arbor Online archive. For the latest breaking news, updates and in-depth coverage, see [MLive.com/ann-arbor](http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/) (<http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/>)

belboz

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 4:13 p.m.

What's dumber... Making a home made firework? Or posting on A2.com with the expectation that it will lead to action and that people care? I've found out it is the latter. At least the former shows some imagination and initiative.

Lizzeh

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 3:52 p.m.

hmmm, bb's and explosive powder in a container. Clearly these people don't know the difference between a firework and a claymore mine.

JRW

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 3:26 p.m.

The majority of the injuries were from metal shrapnel in an explosion, Stoll said. "A lot of people make homemade explosives," Stoll said. "They fill a container with gunpowder and put metal pieces or BBs in it. Then they put it in something and try to blow it up." Stick to the professional displays. Any kind of explosive device such a pipe bomb described here is illegal and has one purpose, to injure someone. It is just incredible that someone actually thinks this is a legal device to make and detonate on the 4th of July. It's worse than a low IQ, it's a criminal act.

JRW

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 3:22 p.m.

The majority of the injuries were from metal shrapnel in an explosion, Stoll said. "A lot of people make homemade explosives," Stoll said. "They fill a container with gunpowder and put metal pieces or BBs in it. Then they put it in something and try to blow it up." Shrapnel? This is fireworks? It sounds more like an explosive device used in Iraq or Syria. NO excuses for making this kind of explosive at any time of the year and trying to pass it off as "fireworks." Any idiot making this kind of device gets what they deserve if they get hurt.

Kea

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 9:23 p.m.

The correct name is IED.

actionjackson



Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 1:56 p.m.

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Did this as a high school kid. Learned my lesson well. Fortunately only two of us at Buhr Park and neither was hurt.

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Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 11:49 a.m.

"A lot of people make homemade explosives," Stoll said. "They fill a container with gunpowder and put metal pieces or BBs in it. Then they put it in something and try to blow it up." Making a firework yourself is one (dumb) thing, but adding metal pieces or BBs = antipersonnel shrapnel designed to do one thing: hurt somebody. That is not a firework, it's a Claymore mine.

Ming Bucibei

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 4:52 p.m.

and a serious federal felony such IED have been illegal as well as simple improvised firecrackers for years Ming Bucibei

tdw

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 2 p.m.

Actually that's a pipe bomb

Candy

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 3:20 a.m.

Once again, I am shocked by the apparent low IQs of so many who live in this supposedly intellectual area!

Dog Guy

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 2:11 p.m.

Candy, you don't follow local politics, do you?

shepard145

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 3:20 a.m.

Kids making things that burn or pop, within reason, is showing interest in chemistry and engineering. This kind of experimentation is good for kids as long as it's supervised by a sober parent. The notion that the only thing that kids should play with is crap that's been approved by "the government" and bought at the store in a plastic wrapper is a symptom of a larger, dumber problem.



Mark Hergott

(<http://www.mlive.com/ann-arbor/>)

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 1:05 a.m.

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~~I don't get it. I really don't get it. The big fireworks are legal, so now some people feel the need to explode home made devices? What happens if decommissioned military ammo becomes legal? Will some people try to make Fuel Air bombs?!~~

jns131

Wed, Jul 4, 2012 : 4:13 p.m.

Decommissioned ammo becomes the property of the military and they do dispose of it legally. So, no, you won't see this stuff anywhere except totally taken apart and safe to handle.

buzz

Tue, Jul 3, 2012 : 11:57 p.m.

This time of year does tend to bring "non-sane individuals" out of the woodwork. Please, people. Explosives are not toys.

jcj

Tue, Jul 3, 2012 : 11:13 p.m.

Must be a pretty dull life if you have to rely on a boom for thrills!

Belisa

Tue, Jul 3, 2012 : 11:32 p.m.

Well I suppose if you did shoot fireworks everyday, it would get boring ... maybe. But I can see how exciting it really is when you do it once a year. Personally, I lead a boring life and it's too much excitement for me ... now that T-storm that just went thru an hour ago ... that was pretty good ... makes fireworks look like tea-time :)

jcj

Tue, Jul 3, 2012 : 11:12 p.m.

A few firework injury facts <http://www.cpsc.gov/onsafety/2012/06/cpsc-science-fireworks-injuries/>

Homeland Conspiracy

Tue, Jul 3, 2012 : 11:10 p.m.

Darwin Awards

jcj

Tue, Jul 3, 2012 : 10:58 p.m.



It is insane to let any numbskull come in and buy fireworks at one of the numerous tents set up around town. They should have to pass an IQ test first! I am sure most of those that choose to spend their money on fireworks get a BIG thrill out of the boom. Whoopee!

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