

# State Fire Marshal advises caution around fireworks

Over the next few days, many Americans will begin celebrating Independence Day – and igniting fireworks will be a major part of that celebration. The Office of the State Fire Marshal reminds Kansans that when lighting fireworks, they are playing with a type of explosive and there is no such thing as totally safe fireworks.

"Fireworks are comprised of dangerous chemicals and combustibles that can destroy property and injure people," says Doug Jorgensen, State Fire Marshal. "These deceptively simple objects explode, throw hot sparks through the air, and can often reach temperatures hotter than 1,200 degrees."

During the week of the July 4th celebrations in 2012, there were 197 reported fireworks-related injuries in Kansas.

Damage to personal and commercial property is another hazard of shooting fireworks. In 2011, there were 26 structure fires, 10 vehicle fires and 199 miscellaneous fires directly related to fireworks from around the state between May 1 and August 31. The total property loss from these fires was \$408,125.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, far more U.S. fires are reported on or around Independence Day than on any other day of the year. In its 2012 Fireworks Report, the fireworks association outlined specific statistics regarding how the use of consumer fireworks relates

to fire danger, including: In 2010, fireworks caused an estimated 15,500 reported fires, including 1,100 structure fires, 300 vehicle fires, and 14,100 outside and other fires.

These fires resulted in an estimated eight reported deaths, 60 civilian injuries and \$36 million in direct property damage.

The report demonstrates using consumer fireworks heightens the risk of injury and even death. The study showed:

The risk of fireworks injury was highest for children ages 5-14, with more than twice the risk for the general population.

Sparklers and novelties alone accounted for 38 percent of the 8,600 emergency room fireworks injuries in 2010.

The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend an outdoor public display conducted by specially trained pyrotechnic professionals.

For those who choose to shoot fireworks, the state fire marshal offers these suggestions for having fun with fireworks while also being safe:

- Always read and follow label instructions.
- Always purchase high quality fireworks from a reliable, legitimate source.
- Alcohol and fireworks do not mix. Have a "designated shooter."
- Never give fireworks to small children.
- Adults should always supervise use of fireworks by older children.

- Always wear eye protection when lighting fireworks.
- Never ignite fireworks indoors. Make sure your outdoor area is safe for firework use.
- Never point or throw fireworks at a person, building, or animal.
- Have a source of water handy, in case of fire.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never attempt to re-light malfunctioning fireworks.
- When lighting fireworks, never position any part of your body over them.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place.
- Never experiment with homemade fireworks. They are dangerous and illegal.
- Bottle rockets and other skyrockets that are mounted on a stick or wire are illegal.
- It is illegal to shoot fireworks on or under a vehicle, on any public roadway, within 50 feet of a firework stand or where fireworks are stored, and gas stations or any place liquid gas – including propane – is stored.

"While shooting fireworks can be a fun way to celebrate Independence Day, it's not so fun if you, a family member or a friend are in the Emergency Room or if a fire truck has to rush to your house to put out a fire," Jorgensen says.

# Northwest Kansas featured in study of severe storm gusts

Researchers across the country recently published a peer-reviewed paper about severe thunderstorm wind gusts. A thunderstorm is considered severe if it produces wind gusts of 58 mph or greater.

The researchers wanted to contrast wind gusts measured by meteorological equipment with gusts that are estimated by human observers.

There are four official measuring sites across the tri-state area. These sites meet specific requirements and are calibrated four times a year to ensure data quality is high. They are at airports in Burlington, Colo., Goodland, Hill City and McCook, Neb. There are over 900 sites across the country.

From 2003 to '09, researchers determined that 1,911 measured severe thunderstorm wind gusts occurred across the U.S. and that

sites in the High Plains recorded the highest number of these gusts in that seven-year period. The station that reported the most was Burlington, with 18 events. Hill City recorded the third highest number. McCook and Goodland were in the top 10.

Here the gusts are listed by rank, site and the number of events:

- 1, Burlington, 18.
- 2, Lubbock, Texas, 15.
- 3, Hill City, 13.
- 4, Liberal, 12.
- 4, Childress, Texas, 12.
- 4, Guadalupe Pass, Texas, 12.
- 4, Wichita Falls, Texas, 12.
- 8, McCook, 11.
- 8, Dodge City, 11.
- 10, Goodland, 10.

Severe thunderstorm wind gusts are common across the High Plains and can originate

through several processes.

In dry microbursts, precipitation falling from a thunderstorm begins to evaporate when it encounters drier air below. This process can cool the air significantly, forming a downdraft which can produce gusts of 70 to 90 mph or greater.

Another mechanism responsible for strong thunderstorm winds occurs when precipitation falling from a thunderstorm channels air from aloft down to the surface, which often results in a swath of damage.

Still other examples include processes occurring in well-organized storms known as supercells, and organized clusters of storms called bow echoes. Each of these has its own mechanism for developing severe winds.

To read the entire paper, go to [www.spc.noaa.gov/publications/smith/waf-wind.pdf](http://www.spc.noaa.gov/publications/smith/waf-wind.pdf).

## Zoo gets two-headed turtle

SAN ANTONIO (AP) – A two-headed turtle has hatched at the San Antonio Zoo and officials have named her Thelma and Louise.

The female Texas river cooter arrived June 18 and is on display at the zoo's Friedrich Aquarium.

Zoo spokeswoman Debbie Rios-Vanskike said that the two-

headed turtle appears healthy and is able to swim and walk. She says experts at the zoo don't foresee any health issues for Thelma and Louise, named for the female duo in the 1991 Oscar-winning road movie of the same name.

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## Screening scheduled at church here

Life Line Screening is taking appointments for Saturday, July 20, in Colby. The company will be conducting screenings at the First Christian Church, 385 W. Third St., for those wishing to reduce their risk of having a stroke or bone fracture.

Screenings are fast, noninvasive, painless and convenient. They identify potential cardiovas-

cular conditions such as blocked arteries and irregular heart rhythm, abdominal aortic aneurysms and hardening of the arteries in the legs. A bone density screening to assess osteoporosis risk is also offered.

Packages start at \$159. All five screenings take 60 to 90 minutes to complete. For information or to schedule an appointment, call (877) 237-1287 or go to [www.lifelinescreening.com](http://www.lifelinescreening.com). Pre-registration is required.

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