



**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT FIRE MARSHAL'S ASSOCIATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY MARCH 15, 2018**

**SB 435 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE AND USE  
OF CONSUMER GRADE FIREWORKS**

Senator Leone, Senator Witkos, Representative D'Agastino, Representative Smith and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. My name is Roger Nelson and I am the Fire Marshal for the Bloomfield Center Fire District and currently sit on the Board of Directors for the Connecticut Fire Marshal's Association.

The Connecticut Fire Marshal's Association **opposes SB 435 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE AND USE OF CONSUMER GRADE FIREWORKS**. This bill would greatly change the type of fireworks allowed in Connecticut and legalize all consumer fireworks including firecrackers, aerial devices, and ground launched devices.

The CFMA opposes this Bill based on the potential of increased injuries to children, increase in fires, increase in responsibilities for local fire Marshals, and lack of continuity with surrounding States. The Bill also does not provide for the State Fire Marshal to create regulations to control access and permitting.

Fireworks are inherently **DANGEROUS**, and those dangers are **COSTLY**.

- Nationally, there was a 70% increase in fireworks related injuries from 2008 to 2015.
- A study concluded that fireworks-related injuries have increased in states that loosen restrictions in their fireworks laws and that there were over 90,000 burn injuries among pediatric patients from 2006 to 2012.
- At least 11 non-occupational fireworks related deaths occurred in 2015.
- The risk of fireworks injury is highest for young people ages 5-9 followed by children 10-19.
- In 2015, 15% of patients injured by fireworks were hospitalized. The percentage of patients hospitalized was higher than the percentage of any other types of consumer product.

- On average, 250 people go to the Emergency Room every day with fireworks-related injuries in the month around the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

#### Poor instructions and Use of Explosives by the General Public don't mix.

- The proposed law allows for the use of rapidly detonating fireworks by the general public. These products may be self-propelled aerial type or ground based fireworks which all contain minimal safety instructions.
- The proposed law would allow them to be used by the untrained public in densely populated areas with no control or oversight of safe distances and clearances to structures and people (whether audiences and/or the general public). The lack of control on both of these can result in personal injury (burns and/or bodily harm) as well as property damage.
- It is human nature to get as close as possible, which in the event of a malfunction would increase the chance of a significant injury.

#### Accidents can occur without warning in a matter of seconds.

- Use of aerial and/or self-propelled fireworks adds a new dimension to the danger versus what is legal in Connecticut now.
- Certainly, there is a potential for increased eye injuries and impact injuries with the proposed change due to the introduction of self-propelled fireworks.

#### Aerial Fireworks vs Ground Based Non-Detonating Fireworks and sparklers.

- The newly proposed fireworks have an “explosive nature” over what is presently allowed.
- There is a much greater potential for destruction because of the energy released, the erratic behavior and the burn characteristics of the contents used in the fireworks.

A CPSC report in 2017 concluded that firecrackers created 17% of the reportable injuries. Roman candles accounted for 7% and bottle rockets 5%. As these fireworks are currently illegal in Connecticut, an increase in injuries will most certainly occur. Children younger than 15 years of age accounted for 31% of the injuries in 2016. Only 4% were injured by illegal fireworks. A conclusion can be drawn that if consumer grade fireworks are legalized in Connecticut, even though they are outlawed from possessing fireworks, injuries to our youth will increase. One recent study to support this theory is a recent study in Iowa where fireworks were legalized in 2017. This study conducted by the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics concluded that fireworks injuries more than doubled in Iowa after the law was changed. The study also confirmed that children under the age of 18 were the most affected by this change.

The change to allow increase in consumer fireworks especially aerial devices will potentially cause an increase fires. The State of Utah which allowed aerial fireworks in 2011 has seen an increase in fires. These fires included structure fires which burned an apartment complex and caused three injuries. The Utah State legislature is reevaluating their decision to increase access to fireworks. A 2013 NFPA study on fireworks related fires including 1,400 structure fires, 200 vehicle fires, and 14,000 outside fires.

The legislature stated purpose for this legislation is to make Connecticut's fireworks regulations match surrounding States. This thought process is lacking evidence. Here are the surrounding States fireworks laws:

Massachusetts – No fireworks are allowed.

Rhode Island – Sparklers

New York – Sparklers

Vermont – Sparklers

Maine – Consumer fireworks except bottle rockets, sky rockets, and missile type rockets

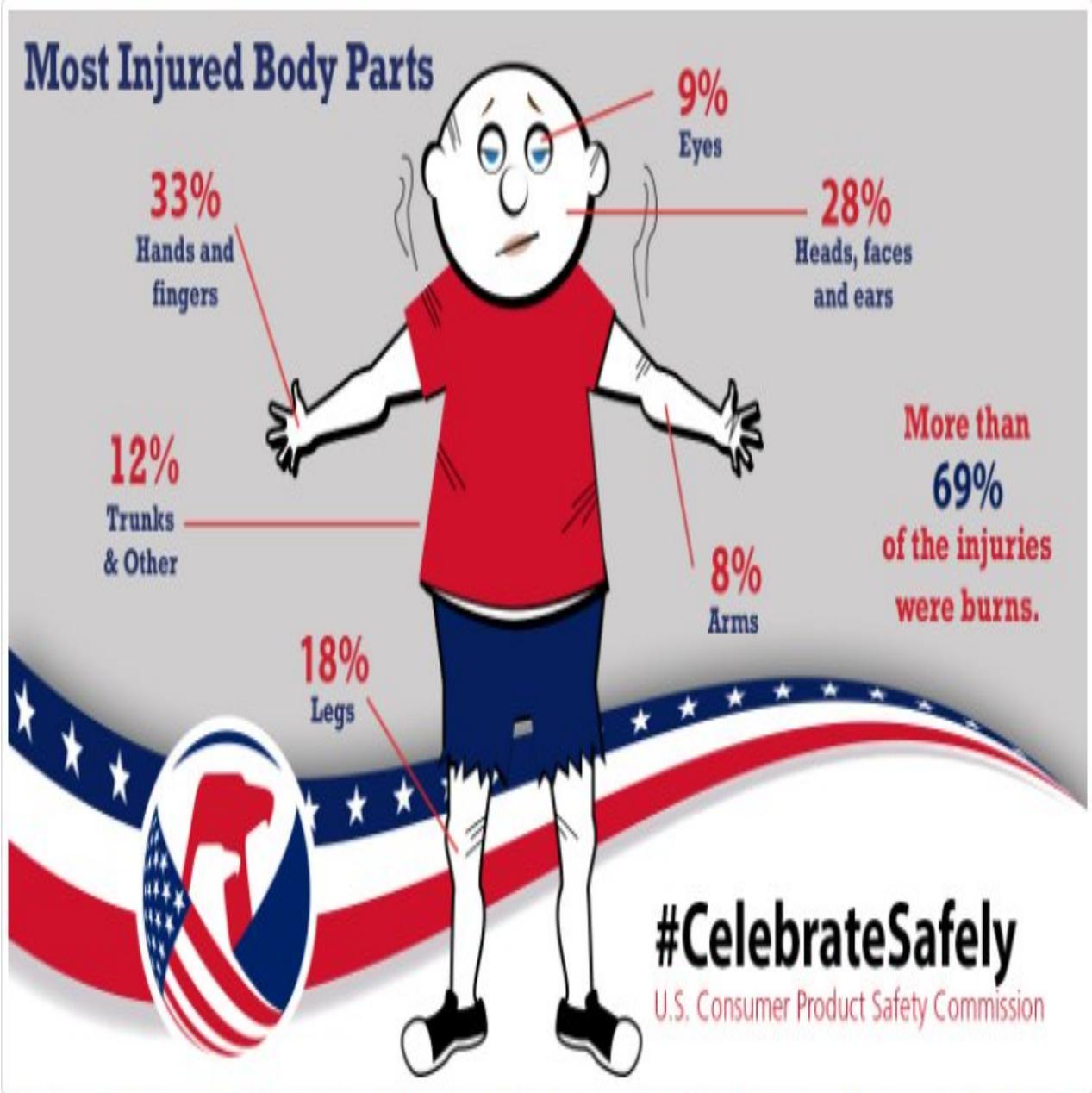
New Hampshire – Consumer grade fireworks except bottle rockets, sky rockets, and missiles  
(not all towns allow use of the fireworks)

New Jersey - Sparklers

This is not simply a licensing concern.....this is a SAFETY CONCERN to both the First Responders and well as the citizens of Connecticut.

In a year where we are obsessed with increasing revenue for the state, let us not lose sight of the safety issues that accompany those gains.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on these safety concerns.



Fireworks are synonymous with our celebration of Independence Day. Yet, the thrill of fireworks can also bring pain. On average, 250 people go to the emergency room every day with fireworks-related injuries in the month around the July 4th holiday.