

Use Caution during Holiday Fireworks Shows

Many Kentuckians enjoy the tradition of viewing fireworks as they celebrate the Independence Day holiday. To help ensure that holiday celebration is safe, attend a community fireworks show, advises Kentucky State Fire Marshal William Swope Jr.

“Professional fireworks shows are staged by experienced companies that take all the safety precautions,” Swope said. “Plus, a pyrotechnics show is a much more exciting experience than setting off fireworks at home.”

Home fireworks carry substantial risks for little reward, Swope said. In Kentucky, only Class 1.4G (consumer) fireworks are allowed by law. This excludes firecrackers, roman candles, and any other device that explodes or shoots in the air.

Every year throughout the United States, thousands of people end up in hospital emergency rooms with injuries from fireworks. In 2007, hospitals treated nearly 10,000 such injuries; 90 percent of the injuries were caused by legal fireworks, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Beyond the injury factor, home fireworks cause many fires. Independence Day sees more fires in the United States than any other day of the year, with most fires caused by fireworks, the NFPA reports. In 2005, fireworks caused an estimated 1,800 structure fires and 700 vehicle fires.

For those who choose to use home fireworks, here are some tips:

- Always read and observe label directions.
- Remember to keep water handy.
- Always have an adult present.
- Never re-light a “dud” firework.
- Don’t give fireworks, including sparklers, to small children.
- Stay away from dry vegetation.

For more information on summer safety, visit the [Cabinet’s Summer Safety Web site](#).

KECC Stories Sought

The Cabinet’s Kentucky Employees Charitable Campaign (KECC) committee is looking for people who would like to share their experiences working with organizations that benefit from KECC contributions. Organizations that benefit from KECC are: Community Health Charities, Easter Seals Kentucky/Cardinal Hill Healthcare System, Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky, United Way of Kentucky and WHAS Crusade for Children. If you have volunteered or worked with any of these agencies and would like to share your story with Focus readers, contact Kellye Cheek or Mary Spalding in the CHFS Office of the Secretary.

Living Well: Change is good!

Do you fear changes in your daily routine or daily life? Most of us prefer to stick to a comfortable routine we are familiar with, where we know what to expect. The goal of living a healthier lifestyle involves change, both in our habits and appearance. The answer to better health is not to drastically change all of your routines and habits at once, but to simply start modifying them. Yes, physical activity is definitely an important component to being healthy. But look beyond the workout sessions and focus more on being good to your body, mind and soul. Lifestyle changes should take you outside of your comfort zone, opening you up to trying new activities and exploring new places. Here are a few simple guidelines to getting started toward making healthy lifestyle changes.

Start small: Focus on those small changes you can make in your daily routine instead of focusing on the bigger challenges (changing clothing sizes or weight loss). At lunch, eat a salad or a sandwich instead of a burger and fries. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Use your work breaks to take short walks instead of sitting at your desk. Try changing one or two behaviors for at least three weeks, and then add something new.

Get inspired: Find something you enjoy doing instead of becoming fixated on going to the gym. Once you find an activity you enjoy, it's easier to create a goal that will keep you motivated to stay active.

Simplify: Getting active should not require a lot of equipment or effort. Select activities that are easily accessible and close to home. If you join a gym across town you will be more likely to come up with excuses to skip workouts.

Make it routine: Regular exercise and healthy eating habits are behaviors. Once you get started and feel the benefits, you will not want to quit. After a few weeks, you won't even think twice about heading for the stairs instead of the elevator.

These guidelines may seem simple enough, but the challenge is getting started. If you find yourself holding back, remind yourself there will be no progress until you take that first step. A healthy active lifestyle takes some planning, effort and commitment, but the benefits will be discovered in all aspects of your life.

Fiscal War: Fiscal Crafts

Celebration is one of life's great pleasures - and one of Fiscal War's most worthy adversaries. Holidays, birthdays, job promotions, retirements... Let's face it: We'll use just about any excuse to take a whack at the piñata these days. And, honestly, who doesn't love to celebrate? I know I do! Stepping out of that mode and into the fiscal war zone, however, I have to admit that gatherings of the celebratory kind often can ding your budget pretty good.

It's a double-edged sword: Splurging on loved ones can fill your heart with both joy and remorse, so I have had to learn to be a bit more frugal in my response to celebrations. While I felt guilty at first, I have begun to realize there are plenty of ways to show people you care about them without spending a lot of money.

This past weekend, for example, marked the second birthday of my adorable nephew Charlie. Of course, I wanted to do something special, but with a baby of my own on the way and all the expenses that come with it, an outrageous financial splurge just wasn't in the cards. So, I set a modest budget for Charlie's gift (and went about \$5 over) and offered to make a few dishes for the party. I chose one dish I knew to be a favorite of my brother's and one that, although simple to make, looked fun and creative. Both seemed to go over well and (I hope) showed Charlie, my brother and sister-in-law that even though I didn't spend a lot of money, I love them and wanted Charlie's party to be special.

Of course, I still daydream about being able to spend unlimited amounts of money on my friends and family and, one day, maybe that dream will come true. Until then, I plan to be as fiscally creative as possible!

Fiscal War Money Saving Tip of the Week: Plenty of self-made gift-giving ideas are out there. In addition to food (which almost never fails), you can also give away homemade crafts such as home decorative items, or even services, such as a night of free babysitting, to show someone you care. Be creative and brainstorm self-made "free" or low-cost gifts the next time you have a birthday, holiday or other occasion to celebrate.

CHFS Health News Tip

Stay Sun Safe

Warm temperatures and extra hours of sunlight entice many to spend more time outdoors in the summer, dramatically increasing exposure to harmful rays that can cause skin damage and are linked to skin cancer.

According to the Department for Public Health (DPH), some sunlight - about 15 minutes twice a week - is necessary for people to make and use vitamin D. However, exposure in excess of this can be dangerous.

Twenty-seven Kentuckians were hospitalized due to severe sunburns in 2007, some resulting in dangerous second- and third-degree burns, according to the state Office of Health Policy. Of those, six patients were children ranging in age from younger than 1 to 12 years old.

Overexposure to sunlight can lead to extreme pain and skin injury, particularly for young children. The cabinet's summer safety campaign stresses the importance of adults supervising and taking adequate precautions on behalf of children to protect them from serious sunburn.

In addition to immediate pain, overexposure to sunlight, sun damage and burns can heighten the risk for developing skin cancer. According to the Kentucky Cancer Registry, the incidence rate of invasive skin cancer in Kentucky was nearly 22 out of every 100,000 people from 2001 to 2005. The mortality rate for the same period was 4.39 per 100,000 people.

Some tips for avoiding sunburn or side effects linked to sun exposure are:

- Avoid sunbathing.

- Avoid tanning parlors.
- Wear a hat that shields your face from the sun.
- Limit your sun exposure. The sun is hottest and strongest between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor of 15 or greater.
- Wear sunglasses that are UV rated. Choose cosmetics, moisturizing creams and lotions that contain sunscreen.
- Protect your lips with products that have a sun protection factor of 15 or greater.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

We all work as part of at least one team – with our regular officemates or as part of a special project. But there's always room for improvement, so business consultant Tom LaForce (tomlaforce.com) offers these tips to focus on building more highly effective teams.

Restate the team's purpose. It should be obvious to any team member. Measurable performance objectives will help determine whether the team's purpose justifies the resources it requires.

Agree on a plan. Successful teams not only have plans to meet their objectives, they also have the discipline to stick to them and the wisdom to be flexible about a changing situation.

Ensure the right resources are available. Teams without the tools they need will be slow to produce results.

Know the roles of each team member. Each person should agree to accept the responsibility for delivering on those expectations.

Adopt a clear decision-making process. Be consistent in following these steps.

Re-evaluate your team. If members aren't energetic or excited to be a part of it, it may be wise to get back on track by talking about these tips.