



NEWS RELEASE



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & RESCUE

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Police and Fire Officials Remind Retailers and Citizens: Ground-based Sparklers Prohibited in Howard County

As the July 4th holiday approaches, the Howard County Departments of Police and Fire and Rescue are taking efforts to remind citizens and businesses about county fireworks laws and safety. The Howard County Council passed legislation in 2003 prohibiting the sale, possession and use of ground-based sparklers. Violators are subject to a fine of up to \$250.

The Howard County bill was introduced after the Maryland General Assembly added, for the first time in 60 years, certain ground-based sparkling devices to the list of legal fireworks in 2002.

As a result of the change in the state law, Howard County Fire and Rescue responded to 12 calls related to ground-based sparklers in the few weeks leading up to the July 4th holiday that year. Most of the calls were for brush fires that endangered homes and other structures. In many of those cases, structural damage was only averted by the quick response of the fire department.

In another case, a young child was treated for first- and second-degree burns on her face following a July 4th incident with a ground-based sparkler. Later in the year, the police department, fire department and bomb squad responded to a report of an explosive device in a mailbox that turned out to be a ground-based sparkler.

In response to the change in the state law making ground-based sparklers legal, and the significant safety risk associated with the devices, the county council passed legislation prohibiting ground-based sparklers in Howard County.

The law does not affect the sale or use of other fireworks, such as handheld sparklers, party poppers, ignitable “snakes” and “snap n’ pops.”

For legal fireworks, police and fire officials are urging people to use devices safely. In 2007, nearly 10,000 people in the U.S. were treated in emergency rooms for fireworks-related injuries, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Burns were the most common, accounting for more than half of the incidents. Over the last 10 years, there has been an upward trend in fireworks-related injuries. Eleven deaths were reported in 2007, the same number as the previous year, according to the CPSC.

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