

Can a Styrofoam cup save your eyesight this July 4th?

GREENVILLE, SC (June 26, 2014) -- This July 4th, thousands of people in the Upstate will light up sparklers and bottle rockets to celebrate Independence Day. Most will go home happy and excited. Some will go to the emergency room.

Dr. Donald Glaser, an ophthalmologist with Clemson Eye, believes parents and children can use fireworks safely, if they follow reasonable precautions. But accidents will happen — in fact, 9,000 Americans each year experience eye injuries as a result of fireworks accidents. One in six of these eye injuries results in blindness.

Quick and correct actions can be vision-saving. Here are three ways Dr. Glaser says you can make a big save if an eye injury occurs:

- A common injury is a cinder or some other particle in the eye. There can be chemicals or ash flying around when fireworks are set off. Ash is alkaline (like bleach), which can cause damage. Flush the eye with water for about five minutes to rinse the material out of the eye. The flushing will rinse the ash or chemicals out.
- If something has gotten into the eye, cut a Styrofoam cup in half and place the bottom half over the eye, securing it with tape. This will reduce the possibility of rubbing or putting pressure on the eye until you can be seen by an eye doctor.
- If there is pain or reduced vision, call your eye doctor immediately. If it is after hours, call their emergency doctor-on-call line. If you don't have an eye doctor, go to the emergency room right away.



“Use common sense,” Dr. Glaser says, “and don't try to get anything out of the eye yourself. Rubbing the eye will only make things worse.” Don't be embarrassed about calling your eye doctor or going to the emergency room, he says. Delaying treatment for an eye injury will only cause more problems.

Of the 9,000 people with eye injuries each year, the American Academy of Ophthalmology estimates 45 percent are children under 15. Adults need to exercise caution with fireworks and, “Never let a child light a bottle rocket or other fireworks themselves,” Dr. Glaser cautions.

The image of kids running through the yard with sparklers is an iconic view of our July 4th celebrations. But those sparklers burn magnesium – a metal – at 1200 degrees. That's 1000 degrees hotter than boiling water. Getting sparklers too close to the eyes is very risky and children are often allowed to handle sparklers on their own, with little parental monitoring.

Additional availability: To set up an interview with Dr. Glaser, please contact Laura Haight at 864-322-3179.

Clemson Eye has been a leading provider of visual health for Upstate residents for the past 40 years, providing them with comprehensive ophthalmologic and Lasik services. Clemson Eye has five convenient locations in Greenville, Anderson, Easley, Clemson, and a Lasik center, Spectrum Lasik, in Greenville. Its American Board Certified Ophthalmologists have performed more than 50,000 cataract, Lasik and microsurgical procedures.

