

# PRESS RELEASE



To: News Editors & Directors

Contact: Noella Querubin, Mana Means Advertising & Public Relations, (808) 521-1160

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **HAWAII OPHTHAMOLOGIST WARNS FIREWORK INJURIES POSE LARGE THREAT TO CHILDREN Eye Professional Raises the Level of Awareness by Recognizing June as Fireworks Eye Safety Month**

*(Honolulu, Hawaii), June 21, 2006-* Fireworks are an especially popular way to celebrate Independence Day in Hawaii, however, statistics in recent years show that nearly 2,000 Americans are treated in emergency departments annually for fireworks-related injuries involving the eye, and about half of those reported are under the age of 15.

Hawaiian Eye Center Medical Director Christopher Tortora, M.D. joins the American Academy of Ophthalmology in reminding Hawaii residents June is Fireworks Eye Safety Month, in an effort to raise awareness prior to Fourth of July festivities.

“Firecrackers, bottle rockets, and illegal aerial fireworks can cause serious eye injuries,” said Tortora. “Heat from even seemingly harmless sparklers can cause severe injury with an intense heat that damages the cornea and ocular surface. The best thing to be safe this Fourth of July is follow precautionary measures to avoid these type of injuries.”

- View fireworks from a safe distance – at least 500 feet away, or up to a quarter of a mile for best viewing. Don’t stand too close to anyone lighting fireworks. Fireworks more often injure bystanders than the operators themselves.
- Wear protective eyewear if you are igniting fireworks.
- Never let children play with or ignite fireworks of any type, including sparklers. Sparklers can heat up to 1800 degrees.
- Choose legal fireworks that are appropriate for the area you will be using them in. For example, avoid using bottle rockets or aerial fireworks in backyards and busy streets.
- Leave the lighting of fireworks to trained professionals.

If an accident does occur, Tortora strongly suggests getting immediate care from an ophthalmologist or hospital emergency room. "It could be the difference between saving a person's sight or preventing permanent blindness," he said.

Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of The Hawaiian Eye Show, a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventive eye care. To learn more about other eye safety measures, please call Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8448 where "*life has never looked better.*"

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