

Fireworks injuries, sales on the rise

By Steven Overly, Washington Post

It's all pomp and patriotism until someone burns a limb.

The number of fireworks-related injuries soared to their highest level in more than a decade last year, according to a U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission report released last week. An estimated 11,400 injuries were reported during 2013, a staggering 31 percent climb compared to 8,700 injuries reported the year before.

Bob Adler, the commission's acting chairman, said a direct cause for the jump is difficult to determine. On the one hand, he said, states such as Michigan, Maine and Arizona made fireworks more accessible to consumers. In other states, however, people may be taking safety for granted regardless of regulations.

"My first hope is that it's just a fluke and an aberration," Adler said. But "what we've seen is an expansion in the ability for members of the public to get access to fireworks, and that's not necessarily a good thing."

The 44-page report also details eight deaths in 2013 caused by head and chest trauma, or house fires that resulted from mishandled fireworks.

Still, the sudden rise in injuries may be a cause for concern as the nation prepares for the Fourth of July holiday and families load up on sparklers, bottle rockets and other backyard pyrotechnics. The American Pyrotechnics Association in Bethesda, Md., predicts sales of consumer fireworks will exceed \$675 million in 2014, an all-time record.

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