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Fireworks Industry Safety Group Drives Down Injuries While Fireworks Usage Increases
--AFSL develops successful product testing standards that exceed federal standards--

BETHESDA, Md. (June 23, 2008) – The American Fireworks Standards Laboratory (AFSL) is reducing fireworks injuries as usage of consumer fireworks continues to rise in the United States. The independent non-profit organization's work with the fireworks industry has helped to ensure that fireworks products available today are of the finest quality and the safest ever manufactured, according to John Rogers, executive director of AFSL.

AFSL was created in 1989 by members of the fireworks industry to improve the safety and reliability of consumer fireworks sold in the U.S. Working with technical experts and federal and state regulators, among others, AFSL developed strict design and performance standards for fireworks that exceed the federal standards required by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Compliance with AFSL's safety standards is voluntary, and more than 131 U.S. importers and distributors and 77 Chinese shippers, representing most of the consumer fireworks sold in the U.S., are members of AFSL and have committed to the testing and certification of their products for compliance with AFSL's standards.

According to Rogers, the fireworks industry's role in the formation and development of AFSL has been touted in recent years by many observers, including CPSC officials, as a model to other industries seeking to establish strong voluntary standards and testing of products imported from China. "The American Fireworks Standards Laboratory has been an important ally to CPSC's ongoing efforts to make fireworks safer in the United States. AFSL-certified fireworks consistently meet federal requirements at a far higher rate than non-AFSL products," said CPSC Acting Chairman Nancy Nord. "The CPSC-AFSL relationship is an excellent example of how government, industry and consumer representatives can work together to improve product safety for American consumers."

Through its stringent product testing, which takes place at the factory level in China to confirm the quality and safety of fireworks prior to their export to the United States, AFSL provides reassurance to manufacturers and importers of fireworks that their products are meeting the highest recognized standards, resulting in substantial benefits to consumers, as well as to local, state and federal regulators and public safety agencies.

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AFSL has played a strong role in reducing fireworks injuries in the United States through its advancement of fireworks product quality. While Americans' usage of fireworks increased nearly ten-fold from 29.0 million pounds to 278 million pounds between 1976 and 2006, fireworks injuries have decreased dramatically from 38.3 to 3.3 injuries per 100,000 pounds of fireworks over the same period.¹ With the adoption of strong voluntary safety standards, the fireworks industry has helped to preserve the tradition of celebrating holidays with fireworks, while ensuring that consumer safety remains a key business priority.

“The level of understanding of and compliance with the United States fireworks regulations was alarmingly low when AFSL was founded in 1989,” says Rogers. “It has taken a sustained commitment by AFSL and its members to reduce the potential risks of injury associated with fireworks and to gain broad acceptance by Chinese manufacturers of AFSL’s safety standards and testing program. The result has been a marked improvement in product quality and a dramatic reduction in consumer injuries.”

The AFSL label found on each case of fireworks certified by AFSL has become a symbol of product quality and reliability, instilling confidence in fireworks importers, distributors and retailers and improving the safety of products sold to consumers.

For more information about AFSL, visit www.afsl.org.

About AFSL

Founded in 1989, The American Fireworks Standards Laboratory (AFSL) is an independent, non-profit organization established by members of the fireworks industry across the country and the globe to reduce the potential risks associated with consumer fireworks products. AFSL is dedicated to reducing fireworks injuries and maintaining and executing the highest product testing standards to foster best practices in international trade for consumer product industries.

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1. Data from the American Pyrotechnics Association.