Prevent Blindness Texas Works to Save Sight and Lives by Educating Public, Lawmakers on Dangers of Consumer Fireworks

-To Help Prevent Serious and Sometimes Fatal Injuries, Prevent Blindness Texas Supports Bans on All Consumer Fireworks-

HOUSTON (June 25, 2015)—Injuries from fireworks accounted for 11,400 visits to emergency rooms in 2013, according to the latest data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). And, eight non-occupational fireworks-related deaths occurred in that same year as well.

The data also showed that 16 percent or 1,200 of fireworks-related injuries were to the eyes. Burns were the most common injury to all parts of the body, except the eyes, where contusions, lacerations, and foreign bodies in the eyes occurred more frequently.

Fireworks laws vary from state to state and sometimes, within different counties. According to the American Pyrotechnics Association 47 states plus the District of Columbia allow some or all types of consumer fireworks. Only Delaware, Massachusetts and New Jersey ban all consumer fireworks.

However, despite warnings from fire, law enforcement, medical groups and other public safety officials, some states are trying to legalize them citing the benefit of sales taxes and fees that could be generated. In fact, Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, Illinois and Iowa were among the states where legislation was introduced in the past year to expand consumer grade firework (aka as 1.4G fireworks) usage within the state.

“There is no such thing as ‘safe-and-sane’ fireworks, and any tax revenue that may be generated from the sale of fireworks won't make up for the costs in damages, specifically in terms of medical responses and treatment,” said Sherill Williams, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio and a leading advocate for the ban on the sale and use of consumer fireworks. “Nearly half of all injuries are suffered by innocent bystanders who chose not to use fireworks, but are paying the price of the risky behavior of others, many times complete strangers.”

Prevent Blindness supports the development and enforcement of bans on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks and sparklers, except those used in authorized public displays by competent licensed operators. The group works with leading
organizations to educate the public on the dangers of consumer fireworks and endorses legislation to help protect adults and children from needless injuries from fireworks.

As part of the group’s official position statement, Prevent Blindness further supports the following:

- All state governments should adopt a uniform model law that would establish standards and codes for public fireworks displays conducted under controlled conditions by trained and licensed personnel.
- The importation, general sale and indiscriminate use of all fireworks (including consumer fireworks and sparklers) by unlicensed adults and children should be banned. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission should work to ban the use of consumer fireworks and sparklers by the public.
- Federal agencies should enact and/or rigidly enforce regulations prohibiting the importation, Internet/mail order and interstate transportation of consumer fireworks and sparklers.
- Healthcare practitioners and local authorities should be required to report any fireworks or sparkler-related injuries, property damages and deaths. Injuries and incidents can be reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission by calling 800-638-2772 or filing a report on their website at http://www.cpsc.gov/.
- All professionals, organizations and agencies concerned with the safety of the American public should intensify educational efforts to inform adults and children of the hazards associated with the use of all types of fireworks and sparklers.

“Prevent Blindness continues to work with state legislators across the nation to educate them about the risk of consumer fireworks and will continue to work against legislation that increases the risk of injury from fireworks, especially for children,” said Debbie Goss, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness Texas.

For more information on the dangers of fireworks, please call Prevent Blindness Texas at 1-888-98-SIGHT, visit www.preventblindnesstexas.org or log on to preventblindnesstexas.org/prevent-eye-injuries-fireworks.

About Prevent Blindness Texas
Founded in 1956, Prevent Blindness is the state’s leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness Texas touches the lives of thousands of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the Texas public. Through a network of regional offices and volunteers, we are committed to eliminating preventable blindness in Texas. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-888-98-SIGHT or visit us on our website, Facebook, or Twitter.

###