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## CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **THREE SERIOUSLY INJURED BY FIREWORKS THURSDAY**

*Three men suffer serious injuries in Muscatine fireworks incident July 4*

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** – A Muscatine man lost his hand and two others also suffered serious injuries in a fireworks incident Thursday afternoon in the East Hill area of Muscatine.

Assistant Fire Chief Michael Hartman said that this was the most serious incident in Muscatine related to fireworks since the State of Iowa made the sale and discharge of fireworks legal two years ago.

“We had a pickup truck burned as a result of fireworks a year ago but this is the worst personal injury we have had since fireworks became legal,” Hartman said.

The Muscatine Fire Department and Muscatine Police Department are continuing their investigation into the incident.

The preliminary report indicates that one of the three men allegedly lit a mortar while holding it in his hand and attempted to throw the mortar before it exploded. That man lost his hand in the resulting explosion while a second man suffered injuries to his face, eyes, and ears, and a third man apparently lost several fingers.

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Two of the three were transported to Unity Point-Trinity Hospital by Muscatine Fire Department ambulance and one drove himself to the hospital. One of the men was airlifted to Iowa City by helicopter while the other two were transported to Iowa City by MFD ambulances. All three are expected to recover from their injuries.

A mortar is a paper or HDPE (High Density PolyEthylene) tube containing a shell with a long fuse. The shell has a lift charge on the bottom that helps propel it into the air. Once in the air, the shell explodes open and release stars and other effects that streak the sky with various designs. Most display fireworks are shot from mortars.

“It is important to follow the manufacturer’s guidelines when discharging fireworks as they are all different,” Lieutenant Anthony Kies of the Muscatine Police Department said. “These are very dangerous and this is why the laws and policies are put in place ... to ensure everyone's safety.

Many of these accidents are avoidable by simply following the safety directions which are listed on each package Lt Kies said.

“And please understand that you must be 18 years old to possess them and use with caution,” Lt. Kies said.

“Fortunately, the legal time to discharge fireworks is over,” Hartman said. “But it was a very busy day for the Fire and Police departments.”

The Muscatine Police Department responded to over 20 fireworks calls after the 10 p.m. deadline for legally discharging fireworks Thursday including several calls concerning the discharge of fireworks on streets, roads, and inside Riverside Park.

According to Muscatine City Ordinance, fireworks can only be legally discharged in celebration of Independence Day on July 3 and July 4 from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Muscatine Fire Department was also kept busy with 12 calls throughout the day, but were especially busy around the time of the Muscatine Independence Day parade that the department was unable to participate in this year.

“We had several medical calls, including the East Hill incident, and one fire call,” Hartman said.

Hartman said one of the fire calls came after a passing motorist noticed the siding of a house on fire and doused the fire with water as the fire department was being dispatched. The investigation into the cause of that fire continues with fireworks a possible cause.

A structure fire in Muscatine County was also reported Thursday. Muscatine Fire Department was not involved with that call but Hartman said he understands that the cause was attributed to improper disposal of fireworks.

“The proper and safe disposal of used or unexploded fireworks is just as important as the proper and safe discharge of fireworks,” Hartman said.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recommends that if you have unused, misfired, or “dud” fireworks, residents should follow the following steps:

- Completely submerge fireworks in a large bucket of water and soak overnight.
- Wrap the completely soaked fireworks in plastic wrap or two plastic bags so they do not dry out.
- Place the bagged fireworks in the household trash or take them to your local landfill.
- Never put unsoaked fireworks in the garbage. They pose a fire/explosion hazard to people and property.

**STORM KNOCKS DOWN TENTS** – Seven tents and two brick and mortar businesses sold fireworks in the City of Muscatine this year according to Hartman, and last Sunday’s storm damaged several of those tents. The Fire Department worked with the business operators and the tent companies to ensure the tents were safe, and damaged fireworks were not being sold, before allowing the companies to resume selling fireworks.

**THE STATISTICS:** An estimated 9,100 fireworks related injuries were treated at U.S. hospitals in 2018 according to the 2018 Fireworks Annual Report by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Of those, 5,600 occurred between June 22 and July 22 of 2018 with 64 percent

men and 36 percent women. Of the total in the special study period, 36 percent of the total injuries involved children younger than 15 years of age.

Among the different types of fireworks, firecrackers accounted for 19 percent of the estimated injuries during the special study period (June 22-July 22); reloadable shells were involved in 12 percent; and sparklers were associated with nine percent. Multiple tube devices were involved in 8 percent, Roman candles seven percent, novelty devices four percent, bottle rockets three percent, public display of fireworks two percent, and fountains and homemade/altered devices less than one percent each.

Over half of all injuries were related to misuse of fireworks (an estimated 60 percent). Malfunctioning fireworks accounted for an estimated 30 percent of the injuries.

[Iowa DNR Fireworks Disposal Guide](#)