

Fireworks best viewed with safety in mind

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The Fourth of July often means a day off of work, barbecues and fun with family and friends. With that fun, often come fireworks.

Fireworks vendors are seeing a trend in what Spartanburg residents are buying for their own Independence Day celebrations. "People want to sit and light them and see something like you see at the fair," said Darryl Brock, owner of Poor Paul's in Cowpens. As a result, mortar, or artillery, shell fireworks are popular with customers. The mortar shell is made up of a standing tube into which the user drops a ball with a long wick. Vendors say that these fireworks look like those in professional displays without being as loud or traveling as high. The shells range in price from \$7.95 to \$129.99 per kit, depending on the number of balls in the kit and how high they travel. The multishot aerial display fireworks also have been popular this year. The user lights a tube, which is set up to ignite one cannon after another. This type begins at \$3.95 per display and goes as high as \$49.95. Many vendors also sell packages that include several different types of fireworks. Josh Spencer, distribution manager for Red Star Fireworks, said the packages range in price from \$9.95 up to \$250. Among the popular fireworks are the classics -- snap-n-pops, which pop when the person throws them on the ground; bottle rockets, although the smaller ones have been outlawed; and sparklers. "You can't have the Fourth of July without sparklers," Shannon Colegrove said. Colegrove works at Freedom Fireworks on Asheville Highway, a fund-raiser for First United Pentecostal Church.

Although fireworks can be fun, all the stores give advice on staying safe when setting off displays at home. Brock said location is important to consider, especially with the lack of rain in Spartanburg lately. "Stay in an open area, away from woods," Brock said. He added that adults should be the ones shooting fireworks. Colegrove suggested that people using mortar shell fireworks prop up the reloadable tube with cinder blocks and not rely only on the stand included in the kit because of the possibility of the tube tipping over when it ignites. Spencer repeated Brock's suggestion that adults supervise the use of fireworks and that people consider where they are shooting fireworks and added, "If you handle them correctly, you should be safe." Brian Harvey, chief of the Roebuck Fire Department, said his fire department's biggest problem around the Fourth of July is brush fires caused by people setting off fireworks. Harvey and Worthy both recommend using fireworks in an open area away from houses and vegetation. Worthy added that those using fireworks keep a bucket of water or a garden hose nearby. Both men also said people using fireworks should follow the manufacturer's directions. "People still have the tendency to do what they're not supposed to do, like holding them in their hands," Harvey said.