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(Neb.)-PPHD Encourages Individuals To Stay Safe During Fireworks And Family Gatherings



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 07/03/2013 11:22 AM

(PANHANDLE)-As the Fourth of July quickly approaches, Tabi Prochazka with the Panhandle Public Health District is urging families to take precautions in order to have a safe and healthy Independence Day. Prochazka says the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Safety Council are recommending some simple steps to help families plan healthy meals, stay safe outside, and enjoy fireworks safely.

Picnics are a big part of the Fourth of July tradition. Prochazka suggests serving healthier options lower in fat, salt and calories, and be sure to follow the following food safety tips:

- Cook meat, poultry, and eggs thoroughly
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly
- Don't cross-contaminate one food with another. Use separate serving utensils for each dish.
- Wash hands, produce, cutting boards, utensils and countertops thoroughly

Another suggestion from Prochazka involves taking precautions to stay safe during outdoor activities. Wear appropriate safety gear, avoid heat-related illness, and practice sun and water safety. Also,

--Beware of bugs. Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET and wear long sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes, and socks. Take extra precautions at dawn and dusk.

--Swim safe. Practice healthy swim behaviors by taking a shower prior to entering a pool to help protect your family from recreational water illnesses and help stop germs from getting in the pool in the first place. When swimming in lakes, never swim alone, respect the rules posted for swimmers, watch for weather hazards, and take extra precautions to keep children safe.

--Beat the heat and stay hydrated. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink water; the human body needs fluids on a regular basis. Getting too hot and dehydrated can make you sick. Symptoms include a decrease in urination, dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up.

--Protect your skin. Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays in as little as 15 minutes. Protect yourself by seeking shade, using sunscreen, and wearing sunglasses, a hat, and sun-

protective clothing.

The safest way to enjoy fireworks, according to Prochazka, is at a community display conducted by professionals. For those who wish to light off their own fireworks, Prochazka recommends checking for bans on fireworks before buying them for personal use, and making sure to use precautions to protect against fires as conditions in the Panhandle are still classified as dry. Make safety a priority by keeping these tips in mind:

- Older children should use fireworks only under close adult supervision. Never allow young children to handle fireworks, especially sparklers.

- Light fireworks outdoors in a clear area, on a smooth, flat surface, away from onlookers, houses and flammable materials.

- Do not try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Instead, douse and soak them with water, and discard them safely.

- Have a fire extinguisher and/or a garden hose and bucket filled with water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire.

- Stay away from illegal or homemade fireworks, which can often be deadly.

Each year there are dozens of injuries over the 4th of July, so follow these tips to ensure a safe and healthy holiday.

For additional information, visit www.pphd.org or call PPHD at 308-487-3600 or toll free at 866-701-7173. PPHD is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Their vision is to inspire a healthier and safer Panhandle community.

--Panhandle Public Health District