

Script - Print - Learn, Don't Burn

Fire and fireworks season requires extreme caution

Unfortunately, it's been a busy start to summer for the burn unit at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. In the last two weeks five people have been treated for burn injuries due to improper use of fire and flammable liquids.

Burn unit medical director Dr. Stathis Poulakidas says he has treated patients for burns to their legs and upper body from accidents that occurred while using gasoline to ignite trash or light cooking grills.

Because of this, OSF has teamed up with Rockford Fire Department to produce a public service announcement to caution everyone to be extra careful around flames this summer.

"These are injuries that we see and they are all preventable," says Derek Bergsten, Chief of the Rockford Fire Department. "By being at your home, whether someone else's house, just make sure you exercise caution around those things that can cause harm to you or your family members. And we want to make sure we resonate that message with. You know, a little ounce of prevention does go a long way and we want to keep everyone safe and out of the hospital and from injuries."

Gasoline is okay for powering your car or your lawn mower but never use it to light a bonfire or your grill. Store gasoline in a well-ventilated area and away from ignition sources. Be just as cautious with kerosene and propane.

Also, fireworks of any type are dangerous. Even a small fire cracker can cause serious injury. Especially if alcohol is involved.

"Intoxication does play a significant role in poor decision making, says Dr. Stathis Poulakidas, Burn Unit Medical Director at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "So, avoiding that at all costs is probably your best opportunity for a good chance of survival or, at least, no blowing a hand off. That being said, using gasoline and other accelerants to light your fires, trash, bonfires, etcetera really isn't safe and I would actually try disposing of it appropriately - or lighting your fire more safely with different types of materials that are out there commercially."

Aerial fireworks, which are illegal in Illinois, can discharge improperly and burn you or others. Leave the fireworks shows to the professionals.