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## Making consumer fireworks history

Blog Post created by [michelesteinberg](#) on Jun 28, 2018

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In my spare time outside of NFPA, I volunteer as a tour guide with a nonprofit group called [Boston By Foot](#). I talk about Boston's history and architecture to locals and tourists from around the world. July 4 is my absolute favorite holiday, because [I lead people on a 3-hour tour of Boston's Freedom Trail](#), which commemorates important sites that led to the American Revolution. I love to tell people how a copy of the Declaration of Independence was first read to Bostonians from the balcony of the Old State House. The townspeople were so excited about overthrowing the "tyrant" (King George III), that a number of them climbed up the walls of the building, tore down the lion and the unicorn which symbolized royal British authority, and burned those wooden carvings in a great bonfire, perhaps the first precursor to our traditional fireworks celebrations today.

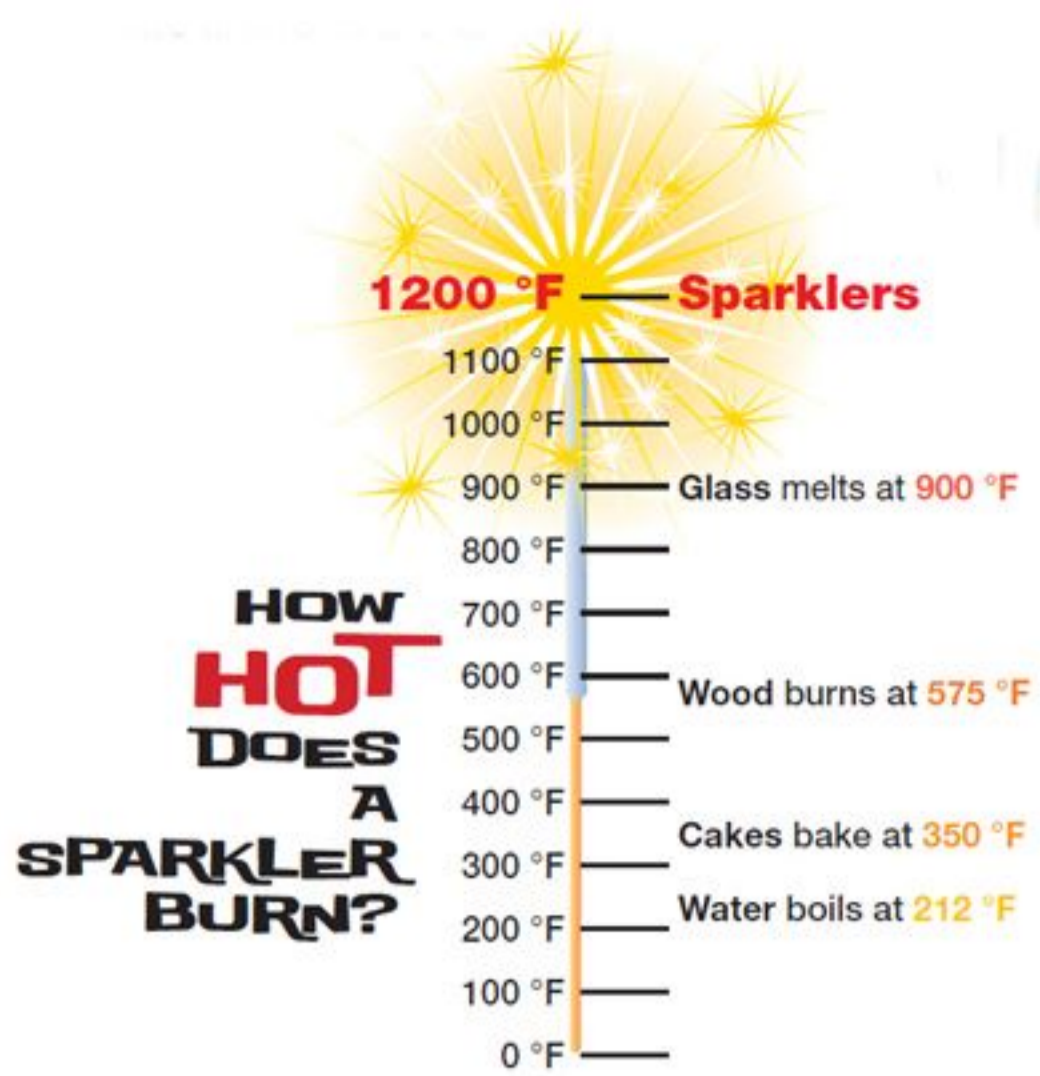
[Boston also holds one of the most famous Independence Day concerts in the country](#) on the Esplanade, which concludes with Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, involving the ringing of church bells, firing of cannon, and, of course, an amazing fireworks display. What I truly love about Boston's celebration is that thousands of people can enjoy the beauty and noisy excitement of those fireworks safely, because the show is put on by professionals.

Yes, you knew I was coming to that -- fireworks, whether illegal or legal where you live, are just plain dangerous when they're not handled by professionals. Fireworks start an average of 18,500 fires each year, [many of which are grass fires and wildfires](#). They result in \$43 MILLION in property damage on average each year - and the 4th of July is no exception, of course, when more than 25% of these fires occur.

[Even worse, in 2015, an estimated 11,900 people visited hospital emergency rooms with burns, contusions, lacerations and fractures caused by fireworks](#). The 30-day period between June 19 and July 19, 2015, was when more than two-thirds of those people were injured. Even worse, 26% of those injured were just kids - younger than 15 years old. Many of those children were hurt by those innocent-looking sparklers - that are hotter than what it takes to melt glass. Four out of five sparkler injuries were to children under 10 years old.

So, on this Independence Day, I hope everyone has a safe and happy time and finds ways to celebrate our nation's greatness without putting themselves, their children or their neighbors at unnecessary risk of injury and loss. [Hand your toddler a glow stick and watch a great fireworks show in your community](#). Think about how much more fun it is to watch the show together than to go to the emergency room together.

As Americans, we have many freedoms, including choices about taking risks. But before you light off that Roman candle, [please do take a look at the facts](#). As one of my heroes, John Adams, once said, "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."



Top image: Boston's Old State House, photo by Michele Steinberg. Bottom image: infographic from NFPA's [Firework Safety Tips web page](#). Extra points for anyone who can provide the historical context of Mr. Adams' quote.

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