

# National

## Ban on fireworks hard to enforce

**United Press International**  
It's Fourth of July season again and the land is resounding with the booms of illegal M80s, ash cans, Silver Salutes and the newest craze, "the super-blockbuster" — all banned under laws as difficult for police to enforce as Prohibition.

"It's like trying to enforce litter laws or Prohibition," said a police official in New York City, where it is not uncommon to see children hurling lighted firecrackers out of tenement windows, despite a state ban on all fireworks.

"What can you do if there are 400 people all lighting firecrackers on the block?"

A total of 16 states have laws completely banning unauthorized use of firecrackers and fireworks, including sparklers, and most other states have bans on the larger firecrackers. In many states, cities and counties also have their own laws limiting firecrackers.

In addition, the federal government has banned interstate commerce for all of the big firecrackers and has registration rules designed to keep such popular holiday explosives as M-80s, ash cans and cherry bombs out of the hands of youngsters.

In New York state's Nassau County, the police bomb

squad said firecrackers are such a problem they annually hold a display to underscore the dangers.

At this year's display, a policeman put a watermelon on the shooting range and fired into it with a .44-caliber magnum, the most powerful handgun on the market. The melon broke into four pieces.

Then a "super-blockbuster" — the newest firecracker craze in Nassau County — was placed in another watermelon and detonated. The melon was shattered into small pieces, its remains strewn across the range.

"That's the newest goodie to rear its ugly head, that's what the kids will be playing with this year — a tube crammed with powder readily capable of destroying a mailbox," said bomb-squad detective Thomas Gilligan.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission in Washington says fireworks-related injuries jumped 18 percent last year from 1979 and reported deaths increased from six to 10.

Law enforcement officials say supplies of powerful illegal firecrackers are plentiful, with the big explosives being produced in "shanty" bootleg factories in the South or being brought up from Mexico.

One apparent illegal fireworks factory exploded last

April in Newport, Ky., killing two men and injuring 25 others.

Many of the firecrackers used in the United States also are imported legally from the Far East, but then make their way to the illegal marketplace, officials say.

"It's like the drug business — the profits are tremendous," said Gilligan.

Unauthorized fireworks have been outlawed in Minnesota since 1941, but on South Dakota highways near the border, roadside stands sprout up for the holiday season.

In Arkansas, firecrackers can be sold by licensed dealers, but illegal entrepreneurs try to cash in on July 4th profits too by setting up illicit stands.

"How are you going to catch them with more than 1,000 stands spread out all over the state?" asked Ray Carnahan, commander of the state fire marshal's office.

In Texas and Oklahoma, many cities ban the use of fireworks, so enterprising vendors set up stands outside city limits. Oklahoma City fire officials say they will stop motorists who purchase fireworks — and confiscate them.

In Washington state where fireworks are limited, Indians on reservations — not subject to state jurisdiction — have been selling illegal firecrackers in recent years.



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## Leading cancer cause not regulated

**United Press International**  
WASHINGTON — The United States regulates 102 substances suspected of causing cancer but not tobacco, which a congressional study says is responsible for more cancer deaths than any other single substance.

"Public health laws exclude tobacco from regulatory action because smoking tobacco is viewed as a personal decision, and one in which Congress has decided not to intervene," said a report released Tuesday by Congress' Office of Technology Assessment.

"The government limits its responsibility to informing smokers and potential smokers of the hazards of cigarettes, conducting behavioral studies on ways of affecting smoking habits and supporting research on low tar/nicotine cigarettes."

Helen Gelband, an OTA research associate and one of the report's authors, estimated 30 percent of all cancer is preventable, largely by stopping smoking. Other cancer-causing factors that can be controlled, she said, are asbestos, excessive alcohol consumption and unnecessary radiation exposure.

The OTA report said cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung cancer in men and women and largely responsible for the recent rapid rise in female lung cancer rates. Smoking, the report said, also is associated with cancer of the larynx, oral cavity, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreas.

"Tobacco is known to contribute more heavily to the number of cancer deaths than any other single substance," the report said.

The report, an assessment of

technologies used to evaluate environmental causes of cancer, said the government has 10 laws aimed at restricting human exposure to cancer-causing agents.

The OTA report said 57 of the 102 regulated substances suspected of causing cancer are covered by more than one law.

Despite the current anti-regulatory mood in Washington, the report said Americans still favor health and environmental regulations.

"The majority of people want protection against carcinogenic risks, and at the same time want to reduce regulatory costs and burdens. Choosing between these two goals or reaching compromises between them will remain an important point of contention in

policies about the control of cancer," it said.

OTA listed 11 ways the government could improve the information that leads to environmental restrictions.

Four of the options for improving ways to determine what environmental agents cause cancer deal with gathering information about the occurrence and distribution of cancer in the population.

Three call for improvements in the way suspected substances are tested for cancer-causing potential.

Three of the options recommend changes to the Toxic Substances Control Act passed by Congress in 1976 and an increase in Environmental Protection Agency resources to assess substances

more effectively before they are introduced into commerce.

The last option presented by the report recommends consideration of a central panel of experts to make technical decisions about regulations concerning cancer-causing substances.

## Lower farm prices help slow inflation

**United Press International**  
WASHINGTON — Prices farmers receive for raw farm products skidded during the entire first half of 1981.

Prices declined 0.7 percent in June — the sixth straight monthly decline. However, average prices still were 11 percent higher than a year before.

The Agriculture Department said Tuesday that farmers received lower prices for wheat, soybeans, corn, hay and lettuce through mid-June. The declines were partially offset by higher prices for hogs, tomatoes, potatoes, broilers and turkeys.

Lower farm prices translated into relatively stable food prices during the first half of the year, which in turn helped restrain overall inflation.

The first-quarter rise in retail food prices was the smallest in five years. However, high prices for hogs and poultry were a signal that food prices are expected to rise at a higher rate in the second half of the year.

For the year, 10 percent inflation in food prices is expected, and in the third quarter, food prices are expected to rise at an annual rate of nearly 12 percent as meat supplies decline, department economists said.

On the average, the farmer gets one-third of the consumer's food dollar and the rest goes to move the food from the farm to the supermarket checkout counter.

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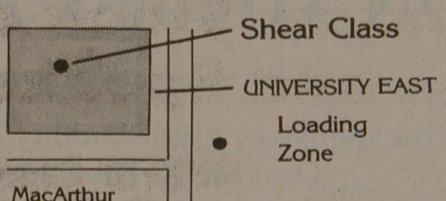
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