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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Independence Day Safety Tips during COVID-19

NORWALK, OH – Independence Day is a day that represents the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States as an independent nation. Traditionally, 4th of July celebrations include gatherings, parades, picnics, and of course fireworks. However, in light of the ongoing global pandemic, these celebrations may have been cancelled or are appearing differently this year. Huron County Public Health (HCPH) wants to remind residents to stay safe while participating in any events that are being held and remember that even as Ohio continues to reopen, home is still the safest place to be.

Huron County residents who choose to celebrate this weekend must keep in mind that HCPH continues to report an increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases weekly, State of Ohio Orders are still in effect, and **mass gatherings of ten or more are still prohibited**. Event and firework spectators should find ways to celebrate in small groups such as by watching displays from their porches, backyards, or cars. It is critical that everyone continues to take proper preventative measures. These measures include:

- Staying home when feeling ill,
- Avoiding others who are sick,
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth,
- Washing your hands often for at least 20 seconds,
- Wearing masks while in public, and
- Keeping at least a 6ft distance between yourself and others even while outdoors.

Residents practicing these preventative measures, and all local businesses continuing to follow all State of Ohio mandatory operating requirements is essential to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and help get Ohioans back to their normal routines. HCPH urges residents to celebrate responsibly this 4th of July weekend and remember to keep these traditional safety tips in mind.

- **If having a small cookout with family and friends:**
 - Follow all COVID-19 preventative measures.
 - Keep meat and poultry refrigerated until you're ready to cook.
 - Cook meat thoroughly to destroy harmful bacteria.
 - Keep cooked meats hot by setting them on the side of the grill rack. Meat and poultry should be served at 140°F or warmer.
 - When serving food, do not put cooked meat back on the same platter that held the raw meat or poultry. Use a clean dish.
 - Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces often.

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- **Protect yourself from the sun.** Ultraviolet rays can cause skin damage in as little as 15 minutes. Make sure you apply sunscreen with at least SPF 15 before going outside, even if it is cloudy. Reapply sunscreen every few hours or after swimming, sweating, or toweling off. On extremely hot days, do not wait until you are thirsty; drink plenty of fluids.
- **Protect yourself from bug bites.** While outdoors remember to wear insect repellent. Apply insect repellent over top of sunscreen, and reapply whenever reapplying sunscreen. Check yourself and family for ticks after being outdoors, especially if you or your children have been sitting on the ground.
- **Practice swimming safety.** Currently, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can spread to people through recreational water. However, it is important to limit close contact with people outside of your home when visiting public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds, as well as natural bodies of water—like beaches and lakes—to slow the spread of COVID-19. Regular pool safety measures should continue to be followed:
 - Provide continuous and close supervision to swimmers.
 - Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets as directed.
 - Know how to recognize and respond to a swimmer in distress and how to perform CPR.
 - Don't swim or let others swim if sick with diarrhea and don't pee or poop in the water.
 - Take kids on bathroom breaks and check diapers every hour.
- **Remember Firework Safety Practices**
 - Follow all COVID-19 preventative measures.
 - Obey all local laws regarding fireworks.
 - Wear safety glasses when using fireworks.
 - Light one firework at a time.
 - Use fireworks outdoors in a clear area; away from homes and vehicles.
 - Never relight a "dud" firework. Wait 20 minutes and then soak it in a bucket of water.
 - Always have a bucket of water nearby in case of accidents.
 - Never shoot fireworks off in metal or glass containers.
 - Sparklers can reach between 1,200 - 2,000°F. Never leave children unsupervised with sparklers. Make sure they keep them away from their clothing, hair, and face.

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