



For Immediate Release

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American Pyrotechnics Association Offers Information Regarding Fireworks Devices Implicated in Boston Bombing Investigation

Bethesda, MD, April 25, 2013 --In response to the intense media interest surrounding the consumer firework devices purchased in Seabrook, NH by Tamerlan Tsarnaev, that have been implicated as a possible source of explosive material used in the tragic Boston bombings, the American Pyrotechnics Association (APA) issues the following information to help the general public better understand its products and how they are regulated as well as provide some facts to clarify a number of misstatements made by the media in covering this investigation.

“The fireworks industry is heavily regulated by multiple U.S. federal regulatory agencies in addition to state and local regulations with regard to manufacture, transportation, storage, sales and use. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) are the primary federal agencies with oversight of consumer fireworks such as the reloadable fireworks devices purchased by the older Tsarnaev brother. All consumer fireworks are subject to strict pyrotechnic composition limitations as well as construction requirements,” said Julie L. Heckman, Executive Director of the APA.

The fireworks devices allegedly found during the investigation were two reloadable aerial shell kits, each containing 24 small aerial shells. These types of devices contain limited quantities of explosive or combustible chemical composition designed to deflagrate (burn) rather than detonate like dynamite, TNT or military explosives. The specific firework devices that have been linked to Tsarnaev contain a maximum of 60 grams, or roughly 2 ounces, of pyrotechnic composition per aerial shell. Additionally, each aerial shell is limited to no more than 130 milligrams (or 0.005 oz.) of explosive composition, less than three aspirin tablets, which produce a firecracker-like aerial effect inside the shell. Consumer fireworks are thermally stable and do not present a mass explosion hazard as manufactured and transported. Again, consumer fireworks are designed to burn or deflagrate, rather than function by explosion.

Could these consumer fireworks devices be used to produce a pipe bomb or pressure cooker bomb like the bombs involved at the Boston marathon? Perhaps; however, it would take a significant volume of

these small aerial shells to extract the volume of chemicals necessary to create a significant blast and it would be extremely time consuming and dangerous to disassemble the shells to collect the minute amount of pyrotechnic composition in each shell.

Contrary to media reports, consumer fireworks have rarely been used in such destructive activities, especially since there is a vast array of alternate energetic materials widely available via the internet, hobby stores, home improvement centers, etc., which are far easier to obtain, considerably less expensive to purchase, and significantly less time-consuming to deconstruct and obtain material from if someone wanted to cause destruction or harm. In fact, according to data routinely distributed by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), consumer fireworks are rarely used for destructive activities, with the exception of the failed Times Square bombing incident in 2010.

Heckman noted that, at present, we know that two reloadable consumer fireworks aerial shell kits were purchased by the older Tsarnaev brother. The total amount of pyrotechnic composition in two such unopened kits would be considerably less than the amount of explosive material believed to have been used in Boston. In addition, there has been no evidence or federal agency report citing that the fireworks were actually used but rather, were simply found, and there was no observation of colors and other visual effects observed when the blasts occurred which would typically be associated with fireworks. "We believe it is virtually impossible to create the level of destruction and devastation caused in Boston with legitimate consumer fireworks and suspect that the investigation will ultimately point toward other materials being responsible for the creation of the deadly pressure cooker bombs," said Heckman.

The APA and members of the professional fireworks industry pledge our on-going support and assistance to the investigation. Our thoughts and prayers are with all Bostonians and especially the families and victims who suffered from this senseless act of terrorism.

About the American Pyrotechnics Association

The APA is the leading trade association of the pyrotechnics industry. The association supports and promotes safety standards for all aspects of pyrotechnics. Its diverse membership includes regulated and licensed manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, importers and suppliers of pyrotechnics, and professional public display companies. Additional information on the pyrotechnics industry can be found on APA's website www.americanpyro.com

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