Remember Remember the 5th of November

With November 5th just around the corner here are a few tips to protect your eyes from fireworks. There are scores of eye injuries caused by fireworks every year which could be prevented by following safety advice. Only buy fireworks from a reputable retailer and ensure that they conform to British Standards; these will be marked BS 7114 on the box. Read the instructions on the box carefully as different fireworks have different lighting procedures. Light your fireworks at arm's length, using a taper and then stand well back. Stay well clear of fireworks that have been lit – even if the firework hasn't gone off; keep your distance as it could still explode. If you are handling, lighting or intend to be within close range of fireworks you should take precautions to protect your eyes. Wear protective eye wear – normal glasses will not protect your eyes against an exploding firework. Wear polycarbonate lenses if you are going to be lighting fireworks. Polycarbonate lenses are up to 10 times more impact-resistant than plastic or glass lenses. Originally designed for cockpits in fighter planes, polycarbonate offered an impact-resistant, clear window. This enabled pilots a full-field of vision without compromising safety. In the 1970s, the popularity of polycarbonate soared as it began being used for astronaut helmet visors and space shuttle windshields. However, it wasn't until the 1980s that polycarbonate was introduced to consumers as a safe, affordable alternative to standard plastic or glass eyewear. Today, polycarbonate lenses set the standard in eyewear safety. Part of the reason polycarbonate is so strong is because it is, ironically, a relatively 'soft' material. Being flexible is what enables it to absorb energy without fracturing. But being a soft material it does requires a scratch-resistant coating to prevent surface scratches. Once a scratch-resistant coating is applied, your polycarbonate lenses will be nearly as hard as glass–yet remain highly impact-resistant. Of course polycarbonate glasses are not only suitable for dealing with fireworks, they are also used as sports glasses for impact resistance in squash for example and in many work places where there is a risk of injury to the eyes from metal fragments or liquid splashes. Polycarbonate glasses can also be made up to your prescription – ask your optometrist.

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