

GREAT GRIZZLY TIMES

#22 MARCH 2016



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and other firework fans on
our social media:**



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Don't forget our website, where
you can check out videos and
descriptions of your favorite
products!

www.greatgrizzly.com

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Richard B. Shields, President

With the 2016 Fireworks Season rapidly approaching, I wanted to relay my thoughts on what's new and of interest to the fireworks buyer. I am pleased to report that in general pricing has not changed much. That being said, shipping costs have risen about \$1000 per container for special handling at the Port Of Shanghai. This additional fee is likely to be permanent as this port no longer allows the warehousing of fireworks on site. Therefore the merchandise needs to be stored off site and then moved to the port for loading causing the additional charges.

As of this writing, we have been pleased with the import shipping volume that we have been able to receive from the factories to this point in time. We have expected for some time that a

shortage year was on the horizon, as labor is a huge issue with the factories in the countryside. Suppliers have been warning me for years that labor is their biggest issue. We appear to have dodged another bullet, for this season, it's still early to think all is smooth sailing. If weather was to change from the normal spring rains to extreme foul weather then production would change for the worse in China. The same is true if a factory was to have an incident or explosion on site. Either would likely have the entire production ceased by the government, until officials can review all the fireworks factories to see that regulations in place are being followed. If this was to occur in Hunan or Jiangxi Province, then a tremendous amount of goods would be affected. Thus, demands on the workers this time of year makes accidents more likely to happen. Hopefully we will be lucky and nothing major will occur.

The coming Monday holiday should provide fireworks retailers with a four day blitz, coming at the perfect time of the sales season. We will not see another weekend holiday until Saturday, July 4th, 2020. Most business experts agree that proper planning, preparation, and execution will be keys to maximizing your sales potentials. We as importers and wholesalers are in a position to assist our customers with literally everything that you need with the exception of the location and the workers. Be prepared and an exceptional season can be yours. We wish you an "EXCEPTIONAL" fireworks season!

Yours In Fireworks,

Richard B. Shields

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Firework laws are always changing, below are some of the most recent updates that you may want to be aware of in the following states.

ARIZONA

HB 2398 (which will allow the sale of some aerial rockets and legalize firecrackers) passed by a one vote margin. The bill is now headed to the Senate.

GEORGIA

Consumer fireworks became legal to use on July 1, 2015. However there are currently two additional proposals in the Georgia legislature. One limits the time-frame fireworks can be set off. The other proposal will give individual communities the right to restrict the use of consumer fireworks, as well as limit the times they can be set off.

IOWA

Iowa is once again considering legalizing consumer fireworks with SF 508. The proposal would allow communities to choose whether to allow the sale and use of fireworks or not.

MICHIGAN

HB 5327 will allow each municipality to restrict the use of fireworks to specific hours on the three days surrounding Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and New Year's Day.

MINNESOTA

Legislation to expand the legal use of consumer fireworks has advanced a Minnesota House panel. The bill would allow local government officials to set their own rules for fireworks.

PENNSYLVANIA

SB 1055 would allow residents to purchase consumer fireworks. Previously sales were allowed to non-residents who promised to take their items out of state. Sales from temporary structures would be banned. A 10% excise tax on top of the state sales tax would be added. The times fireworks could be set off would be limited to between 10 am and 2 am on December 31 and January 1 as well as July 3 and 4.

TEXAS

Texas has expanded the sale and use of fireworks to include Texas Independence Day, San Jacinto Day, and Memorial Day in addition to New Year's Day and July 4th. Fireworks are still banned in some communities and during drought conditions.

WEST VIRGINIA

HB 2852 was passed in February. The Senate approved a compromised version. Once the House approves the revisions it will go to the governor. The revenue generated from the fees will go towards a veteran's home and volunteer fire departments.

2016 DEMO NIGHT

NCI'S DEMO NIGHT
SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2016
DOORS OPEN AT 3 PM
DINNER AT 7 PM
SHOW AT DUSK

Logos featured: Brothers, Cannon Brand, Shogun, Great Grizzly Times, Pyro Plane, Megabanger, Dominator, Winda, Legend, Glorious.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY & FIREWORKS

Taking digital photographs of fireworks can at times be difficult, or at least different from taking other photos.

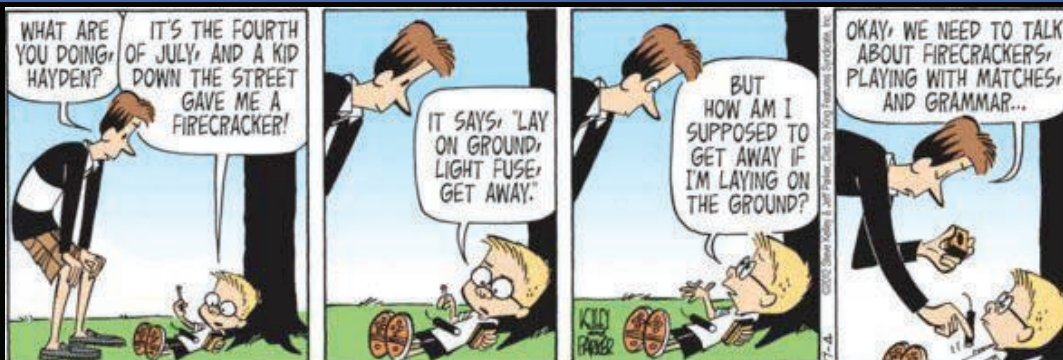
Below are some tips to help you get the most out of your photoshoot.

- **Use a tripod** - Using a tripod will help to steady the camera and reduce blur. If you do not have a tripod available, you can steady your shot by leaning against a stable object such as a building, or a parked car. You can also balance the phone on a table or other similar objects, or use a selfie-stick!
- **Watch the horizon** - To make sure that your shot is straight and level, keep an eye on the horizon. This is especially important if you're going to be shooting with a wide lens, it will get other background elements in your shots.
- **Do NOT use flash** - Using a flash will washout the colors and what you are actually trying to photograph, try using a longer exposure time instead.
- **Use the fireworks setting** - Some newer cameras and phones have a fireworks setting. Try this setting to see if your images come out better than they do with manual settings. If you are using manual settings make sure to use longer shutter speeds to capture all of the light.
- **Use portrait orientation** - For most pictures of fireworks a portrait orientation will look best, unless you are trying to capture several shells at once, or you want to include framing elements. For unique results, shoot more than just the sky: use your photos to tell a story.
- **Burst Mode** - Take advantage of burst mode if you have it available. This will allow you to take several shots back to back so you can choose the best shot.
- **Do NOT use digital zoom** - This can lead to grainy photos, the higher the digital zoom, the less clear your images will be.
- **Turn off HDR** - HDR is bad for fireworks because it tries to blend everything into one image. Since the fireworks are moving/morphing it is best to have this setting turned off.
- **Record a video instead** - Some video recordings are better quality than still shots, and you can always pull a single frame out of a video at a later time.



More tips can be found at the following links:

- www.photojojo.com/content/guides/11-tips-for-sparkling-fireworks-photos/
- http://www.pcworld.com/article/258762/6_smartphone_fireworks_photo_tips.html
- <http://time.com/3941905/fireworks-photos-smartphone/>



PASSFIRE

NCI is a proud sponsor of the Passfire documentary! For those of you who haven't been keeping an eye on the release of Passfire you may be excited to hear that the expected release date is July 4th of this year! And for anyone who doesn't know, Passfire is an independent documentary about fireworks. It digs a little deeper than your typical "artillery shell". The documentary is capturing the world's most amazing fireworks, the people who create them, and the cultures behind them. According to the Passfire Facebook page, it looks like they are just working on the editing side of things currently. This has been in the works for quite a while so I am excited to see the final product! Be sure to check out the documentary after July 4th!

Visit them on Facebook: www.facebook.com/passfire or their website: www.veverkabros.com/passfire.html

EXCITING THINGS FROM KURT



Kurt Cowgill, Operations Manager

Exciting Things Are Happening at NCI!

Hello friends! It has been many moons since I last wrote an article and shared recent experiences with all of you in our semi-annual Great Grizzly Times newsletter. A lot has changed since that time, so I will indeed have plenty to talk about. I have settled in to my new role here as the Operations Manager which I accepted in the spring of 2012 (Wow, it's been that long?) and hit the ground running. I'm entering my 10th fireworks season for NCI and I am more excited than ever about this upcoming season in particular because it is shaping up to be a fantastic year!

Re-Introduction

For those of you that don't know me or my history in this business, I will share a short summary of where I came from and how I ended up here. I grew up locally about 12 miles north of NCI, in the small town of Eaton, IN. The highlight of my high school days was being a part of the 2002 Indiana Boys Basketball State Championship team, the Delta Eagles! After high school I elected to attend Ball State University and study Entrepreneurship. During my time at BSU I searched for summer employment in order to stay busy. I landed here at NCI in 2005 after my brother recommended I fill out an application and get a taste of long hours in a hot warehouse while reaping the rewards of overtime pay. That season proved to be an interesting one for myself, as I became very fascinated with fireworks, and I knew then this was something I was definitely interested in doing on a full-time

basis. The next year I opted not to work for NCI, but to buy from NCI and open up a few retail stores locally. Business was good and my partner and I had a blast! I continued to operate my own retail fireworks stores until 2010. Entering my third fireworks season, I struck a deal with NCI Owner Richard Shields to work in the wholesale office as a Customer Service Rep, which fulfilled my internship requirement for my college degree. This arrangement continued over 2 seasons until 2008. After I graduated in 2008, I decided I wanted to spread my wings a bit and sell insurance. Selling fireworks was much more interesting and rewarding, so I jumped ship and accepted a full-time offer of employment with NCI as a Product Specialist in 2010. The rest is history, folks! Here it is 2016 and some of the scenery has changed but our mission has not. Enough about me, let's get to the good stuff!!



Why NCI?

My responsibilities here at NCI include Product Creation, Development, and Purchasing. I'm here to tell you this job IS as fun as it sounds, and I absolutely love hunting out the latest effects and the best quality merchandise and offering it to you at competitive prices. Anybody that is a regular customer of NCI knows that we strive to bring in several new varieties each year so that you can keep your line-up fresh and exciting. Of course, we don't want to forget about the items that built our reputation so we'll make sure to have plenty of those in stock for your choosing as well.

Another advantage to buying from NCI is the variety that we offer. Don't get fooled into looking like you work for one of our competitors because they mainly sell a primary brand and other area retail competitors are selling the same merchandise. At NCI you may choose from over 10 different brands in 30 different categories. If we are out of something, no worries! We most likely have several similar substitutes to choose from which our knowledgeable office staff will present to you. We don't auto substitute any items unless you request it. You will not be surprised when you get your order with items you did not select. I am proud to say that NCI works closely with our partner suppliers to provide access to the best selection of consumer fireworks, all under one roof. At NCI, you will find the following brands: Brothers, Cannon, Dominator, Glorious, Great Grizzly, HOT, Megabanger, Pyro Planet, Shogun, & Winda. This is a product mix that is sure to set you apart from your competitors even if the competition is steep.

Convention Wrap Up

A rewarding part of the career I have here at NCI is the travel & education this career provides. I've traveled to various conventions in the past several years and have been able to do some amazing things. In September of 2015, I traveled to my 6th NFA convention in Kingsport, TN. The annual trade show was as big as ever and very impressive. I always take advantage of this time to make sure that we aren't falling behind in our product offerings and it allows me to gauge what's being offered and what's popular. Kingsport is only minutes away from the famous Bristol Motor Speedway and Bristol Dragway. Both are absolutely beautiful facilities and set the stage for the most spectacular demo events I have ever witnessed. Each supplier took their turn at providing the best products they had to offer for display and most finished with a breathtaking finale. On the final demo night we were treated to multiple display shells provided by Mr. Bob Kellner. These were awesome and for anybody like me that has a love for pyrotechnics, it was something to remember.

Weeks later it was time to fly to Denver, CO, the site of the annual APA Membership Convention. A hot button issue at this convention was the Federal Motor Carrier proposing changes in rules and regulations for transporting hazardous goods. The APA stays on top of these types of law changes that affect our industry as a whole and is proactive to respond in the best interest of the industry as a whole. APA is doing lots of important work for the fireworks industry and always offers membership to any company who inquire about joining. One branch I am personally involved in is serving on the Board of Directors for a newly organized foundation called the American Pyrotechnics Safety & Education Foundation (APSEF). While we conduct meetings at the APA convention, this organization was formed with the interest of creating Safety & Education awareness campaigns for America's youth to promote the proper and safe use of Consumer Fireworks at a young age. The foundation has already provided solid results with the support of the APA membership and other donors. APSEF has created an extensive, tangible curriculum for grades 4-8 and 9-12 that we hope to roll out to school systems in several states starting in the fall of 2016. The executive board of the APSEF is currently meeting with select states to integrate this curriculum.



My last stop prior to writing this article was Las Vegas, NV for the annual Winter Education Conference hosted by the APA. I'd be telling a tall tale if I didn't say I had too much fun in Las Vegas but it was also a productive week. The seminars and industry sessions were especially helpful and relevant to anyone in our industry. As mentioned above, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has made a final ruling that as of December 17th, 2017 all carriers must be compliant by maintaining Electronic Log Data, meaning the paper logging will be a thing of the past. To summarize what this means, motor carriers will be expected to update all transportation equipment with hardware and software that is compliant with the new law to report driver service hours. Drivers will need to be trained to operate this software, and the carriers will ultimately be responsible for technical difficulties. Some exemptions exist, including operating within a 100 air-mile radius of their home base. In this case, you will not be subject to this new requirement. This new rule will present several new challenges to be compliant but is designed to improve road safety.



Farewells and Hellos

Before I wrap this article up, I think it is important to acknowledge the past and welcome the future. Some of the faces (or voices) have recently changed at NCI. In the last two years we have seen departures of long-time employees Lori Crespo (Cardwell) & Nicole Werner (Stevens). Most recently, Heather Hines also moved on to pursue other opportunities. I was sad to see all of these awesome co-workers & friends leave NCI, but all departures were on good terms and once again we wish all of them the best of luck in the future and thank them for their years of service to NCI.

On the flip side, we have several new faces (or voices) at NCI and I am happy to officially welcome them to the team. Several of you have certainly talked to one or both of our Customer Service Representatives that hired on at the beginning of the 2015 season. Nicole Burnett & Angelic Wood have settled in and are ready for their second season. Both ladies caught on fast and I am confident that they are ready to provide you excellent service for all of your ordering needs. Additionally, we have hired a new Office Manager, Kim Reynard, who has some previous industry experience working for the Indiana Fireworks Distributors Association. Kim started in January and has caught on quickly. I think she will be a great addition to our team. Last but not least, I am excited to welcome Josh Mahoney to NCI in his new role as Regional Sales Director. Josh has a background operating retail stores for one of our local customers and decided to make the jump and make this business his long term career choice. I think we have assembled a great team here and I feel that we are well prepared to assist our customers with all of their fireworks needs!



Premium Display Style Items Coming Soon!

The last thing I'll touch on in this article is a brand new line of fireworks devices that we will unveil and make available to our customers in time for the 2016 retail season. I have worked closely with a long time supplier to bring in 4 new multi-shot devices that will feature premium display style effects. Using PowerLift Technology, these Great Grizzly cakes will range from 28-49 shots and will feature an array of effects that will be sure to please. Powerlift Technology is a new composition that allows less effect powder to be used in the lift charge therefore leaving more for the break charge effect, meaning these performances will be a step above what we have grown accustomed to in the past decade. The best part is, this technology will not sacrifice any height on the lift, but we've simply created a composition that is more efficient in its powder use. Other US importers have brought "Pro Lines" to the market in recent years, but these cakes are made by our long-time supplier who specializes in manufacturing some of the premier display fireworks shipped to the US for shows at Disney World & Thunder Over Louisville to name a few. I'm very excited that these projects have come to fruition and expect that these will be available for sale out of our warehouse

by mid-to-late May in time for the 2016 retail season.

If you have made it to the end of this article I appreciate you reading and I am always available to answer any questions you might have. Sometimes I am not always around the office but I will be sure to call you back or reply to an e-mail as soon as possible. Until next time friends, I wish all of you a safe and successful fireworks season!

Best Wishes,

Kurt



INTRODUCTIONS

NICOLE BURNETT, CUSTOMER SERVICE REP



Hello! I'm the new Nicole! I've spoken with many of you this past season and most of you remember working with Nicole Werner, so I enjoyed the many laughs shared over the confusion. I'm coming up on my second season here at North Central and I couldn't be more excited! I was thrown into the business in the middle of May and oh boy was that a whirlwind! Being new to the fireworks world in general made for a very interesting season. But I learned a lot and can't wait for more!

A little bit about me: I was born and raised in Muncie, Indiana and I enjoy travelling and trying new things. I love the outdoors and I like things that go BOOM! Luckily for me I work in the fireworks industry.

I'll be handling your orders, scheduling shipments, and other miscellaneous tasks around the office. If we haven't chatted before feel free to say hello! I look forward to another wonderful season with you all.

ANGELIC WOOD, CUSTOMER SERVICE REP



Greetings! My name is Angelic Wood; I began working with NCI at the beginning of the 2015 season. This is my first time working in the fireworks industry. This past season was filled with new experiences and I am looking forward to learning more this season.

I am originally from Muncie, IN and have lived here all of my life. This past May, I graduated from Ivy Tech Community College with an associate's degree in Office Administration. The past few years, while attending school, I worked in the office at a local non-profit organization. I have also worked in call centers and in the computer software industry.

I have 2 boys, my youngest is a sophomore in high school, and keeps me busy with the band program and in the band booster club where I am the secretary. My eldest is a sophomore at Indiana University.

At the NCI office, I am taking care of accounts payable, as well as keeping the website updated, assisting our customers with orders, and answering any questions they may have. I am also available to assist staff with other projects when needed. I am looking forward to talking to everyone this year, and meeting some of you for the first time!

KIM REYNARD, OFFICE MANAGER



I'm excited to be the new Office Manager here at NCI and handling the bookkeeping and invoicing. I graduated from Ball State University with a bachelor's degree in legal studies. For the past twelve years I worked at the Delaware County Recorder's Office.

I am thrilled to be part of a local small business and leaving politics behind. I may seem (or sound) familiar to some of you because I worked for the Indiana Fireworks User's Association for three seasons (2000-2002) during summer breaks in college. I am pleased to be working in the fireworks industry again and I look forward to seeing some old and new faces this upcoming season.

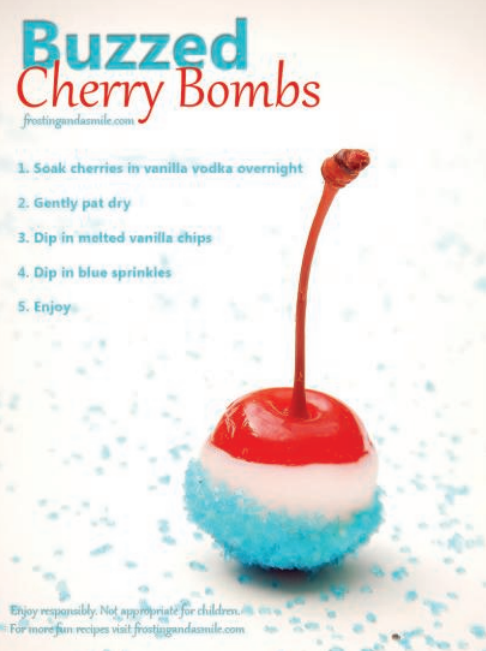
JOSH MAHONEY, REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR



My name is Josh Mahoney, and I am a recent graduate of Indiana University. This is my first year with NCI. However, this is not my first year working within the fireworks industry. I have done seasonal retail management for the past four years, and I can't begin to describe how thrilled I am to have a full-time career within the fireworks industry. The Fourth of July season is one that is very busy, and at times hectic, but it has been a very rewarding season for me in years past. Seeing and hearing the excitement of our customers definitely makes it a worth-while experience; and I look forward to helping aid in that excitement for many years to come. I also thoroughly enjoy fireworks, and my family puts on a rather large show every year. I have plenty of knowledge regarding our products and their performance as well as the performance of products from our competitors. So if I'm not shooting one of my bows, then I'm definitely shooting off fireworks!

It's really an exciting time to be starting with NCI because of the growth that we are currently experiencing. It seems like each and every day there are new opportunities for growth, and I can't begin to describe how exciting it is to be a part of such growth.

I would like to wish all of you the very best in this upcoming Fourth of July season. I hope each of you are successful, and above all else, safe. Have a very happy Fourth of July.



IFDA

INDIANA FIREWORKS DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION

Steve Graves has been the Executive Director of the Indiana Fireworks Distributor Association for over 10 years. He oversees a membership of about 60 fireworks wholesalers and dealers in Indiana. He can answer questions regarding permits, deadlines, and other questions relating to the sale of fireworks. The IFDA reviews potential legal threats to the fireworks industry. The association may hire lobbyists to work on behalf of members to protect their interests when it comes to fireworks. It is important that members communicate their concerns with one another. Be sure to check out www.friendoffireworks.com to become a member or contact Steve at 1-800-535-7477. And don't forget to "like" Friend of Fireworks on Facebook. www.facebook.com/friendoffireworks





Are you covered?

NCI offers additional insured certificates for product & premise!

Contact Nicole for more information.
nicoleb@greatgrizzly.com

Indiana Firework Distributors Association

The IFDA works to support your industry, become a member today!

Contact Executive Director
Steve Graves (800)535-7477
www.friendoffireworks.com
www.facebook.com/friendoffireworks

Pyrotechnics Guild International

2016 Convention "Fire in the Sky, The Sequel"
LaPorte County Fairgrounds, LaPorte, Indiana
Aug 6-12th, 2016

For more information on PGI:
www.pgi.org

National Fireworks Association

NFA Expo, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Sept 6-10th, 2016

For information on NFA's Expo:
www.nationalfireworks.org

American Pyrotechnics Association (APA)

68th Annual Meeting & Convention
New Orleans, Louisiana
Sept 20-23rd, 2016

For more information call (301)907-8181 or
www.americanpyro.com

International Symposium on Fireworks

16th International Symposium on Fireworks
Omagari, Japan
April 25-29th, 2017

For information on the Symposium:
www.isfireworks.com

ROLL CALL! **YOUR NCI STAFF:**

RICHARD B. SHIELDS

PRESIDENT / OWNER - 40TH SEASON

CHARLIE PHIPPS

WAREHOUSE MANAGER - 31ST SEASON

JACK MILLER

PRODUCTION MANAGER - 28TH SEASON

BRENDA SAID

ASST. PRODUCTION MANAGER - 19TH SEASON

SEAN ALEXANDER

ASST. WAREHOUSE MANAGER - 18TH SEASON

KURT CONGILL

OPERATIONS MANAGER - 10TH SEASON

KEDRIC AKER

NATIONAL SALES DIRECTOR - 4TH SEASON

JOSH MAHONEY

REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR - 1ST SEASON

KIM REYNARD

OFFICE MANAGER - 1ST SEASON

NICOLE BURNETT

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP - 2ND SEASON

ANGELIC WOOD

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP - 2ND SEASON

FREDDIE CHEN

CHINA AGENT - 11TH SEASON