

GREAT GRIZZLY TIMES



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Fireworks Industry: China Side vs. USA Side

Each year I try to write and inform our customers as to what is happening on the China supply side of the fireworks industry. This year, since July 4th, we've seen steady production and steady shipping to the US market. We have had no real hiccups to report from the factories or the trading company shippers. Pricing is up slightly from last season, but nothing dramatic to report. By the time you get this newsletter, I am sure all factories will be closed to celebrate the Chinese New Year holiday. Since it will occur at the end of January, 2025, most production will cease at least a week before the holiday. This two-week holiday will likely be the only 100% closure time for these factories each year.

The US market side will have the warmer southern states conducting some retail business for the New Year holiday. Then we will only be a few months away from companies starting to do spring demos in advance of the coming July 4th season. The 2025 fireworks season will be just around the corner. Since the holiday falls on Friday, July 4th, 2025, we enter this season with strong feelings that a weekend holiday always means more business for the consumer fireworks retailers. Weekend holidays give the fireworks retailers a much more optimistic outlook and thusly a chance to capitalize on the extra sales period.

NCI is still working with other companies and countries seeking to expand fireworks exports, but China is still the primary source for US consumer fireworks. With a new change in politics and governmental directions, we still are waiting to see if tariffs will be part of the new landscape. APA and NFA will work diligently to try to keep tariffs off of imported fireworks. In this circumstance there is no US manufacturing market to protect.

Last term, under President Trump, did not bring tariffs to this category, and subsequently we are confident that we will avoid any such tariffs again.

NCI has changed up some things company-wise and now will have a full-time person in China year-round. He will be following up on shipping schedules and quality checks. Doing such follow-up has now become a full-time necessity. Also, we will send additional staff to China periodically to see new products, new effects/designs, and to maintain our longtime relationships with suppliers. Seemingly there is more to do each year in all these areas. Just to stay ahead of the curve, we have to invest more time in the product fulfillment side of the equation.

NCI is proud to announce that we have two more employees that serve on fireworks industry boards. Anthony Burns (AJ) is now a director at APA and also was elected as a board member of PGI. Steven Irvin, operation's manager, was recently elected to the AFSL Board, and Kurt Cowgill continues to serve as treasurer and board member of NFA. I continue to serve on the IFDA (Indiana Fireworks Distributors Assn) Board and have done so for more than 35 years. Our state association is the largest in the country and has served as a model to other states on how to improve the Fireworks Law in favor of our membership. The need to keep up with regulations that affect our industry is a never-ending process. NCI is fortunate that we have capable and willing employees that are dedicated to the fireworks industry as well.

In this newsletter we will introduce you to some new employees and new information that we think benefits you as a buyer and seller. Keeping up on the happenings in this industry is part of the fun of being in this business. We will issue another newsletter this spring and expect that we will all be getting ready for a strong selling season. In addition, we will be looking ahead to get to "2026" and to the 250th Anniversary of the USA.

Best wishes for a tremendous 2025 season!



Richard Shields
Owner/President



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WORD SEARCH

Using the word bank, find all the words hidden in the scramble. For the answer key, scan the QR code. For the chance to win a swag bag of our premium stickers, a t-shirt of your choice from our stock, and some NCI ball point pens, email a photo of the completed word search to gabi@greatgrizzly.com with the subject line "Newsletter Drawing." All Submissions must be emailed by February 28th to be entered to win.

WORD BANK

- Beach Bombs
- Predator XL
- Llama Be Chillin
- Astro Trip
- Honcho
- Joltix
- Jelly Shock
- Silent Disco
- Blaze It
- Boombox Hero
- Fractured
- Honey Badger
- Island Time
- Orbit
- Butterfly Effect
- Viper Strike
- Gold Web
- High Limit
- Hornets Nest
- Powerball
- Quadzilla

F Z A Z V W N V I P E R S T R I K E W O M G O W Q
O M K L V X Z V N H Y O U K P R E D A T O R X L X
R W F S C W S H K I B L A Z E I T L K N Q K K D O
B C Y Y O N L I S I S L A N D T I M E G F G F H V
C L X I T A A O L Q H T R E J N L Q S U T K V G F
C E C R Z O I I H E D N P G O L D W E B X X W C R
G V Y U C R T D L S N D K K V Z I W V U N Y P Z A
U Y W E C X P N C Z M T T W N K S A Y T N X O F C
T D S X C L V D U S V S D H C Y R D S T E N W F T
B U K W B K F V I Y S E T I E A H Q T E B B E E U
U H N L H K P M S R X E A G S F W B S R E F R U R
H O N E Y B A D G E R T H G P C V S W F A N B X E
S W U Q J G T L N H J C T G D M O I O L C H A C D
C H Q U A D Z I L L A W M H V M A E R Y H I L H S
W O U S L L A M A B E C H I L L I N B E B G L X U
Y N L J P E T N Q R T F D B R J P R I F O H V G F
T C P J E L L Y S H O C K T Q H Z F T F M L Y M Y
K H H Q G I H A S T R O T R I P Q P P E B I C R Q
N O B X K H I B H O R N E T S N E S T C S M V C T
H Z D S C P U J U R P V M J Y M B C R T A I Y V P
G A L I Z L Y P V J B L U P M F H D B P P T W R G
B O O M B O X H E R O M D K T U G W S Y H I L E C
O C E K L J R S B Q M M Z E J O X V J L S X J L S
J W C Z I R B S E W S X U F W V O Q I W O E H B W
G F Z V M A M H K J O L T I X D E Z T Q S T E C W

Scan here for
Answer Key



KURT, STEVEN, AND NICO IN CHINA

NCI AT THE 2024 NFA EXPO



INTRODUCTION: NICO SOUZA

Hello everyone,

I'm happy to introduce myself and share a little about my experience in the fireworks industry. Over the years, I've worked in different areas of the business, including manufacturing, logistics, and navigating regulations.

Most of my time is spent in Liuyang, China, widely known as the heart of fireworks production. Living and working there has given me a deep understanding of how fireworks are made and the effort that goes into every single product. I've also had the opportunity to work in Brazil and the U.S., which has helped me gain a broader view of the industry and its global connections.

Right now, the domestic market in China has slowed down, but export orders are picking up and moving along well. Factories remain busy as they adapt to challenges and focus on meeting international demand with high-quality products. One major change I've noticed is the growing use of mechanization. With fewer workers willing to take on jobs in fireworks factories, manufacturers are turning to automation to keep up with orders, improve safety, and speed up production processes. These adjustments ensure the industry can continue meeting customer expectations around the world.

I'm excited to join this community and look forward to contributing to the work we all do. Fireworks are more than just products—they create memories, and I'm proud to be part of delivering those special moments.

Thank you for welcoming me, and I look forward to the future!



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ACH payments are also available after filling out our ACH Authorization form and sending in a voided check.

NCI AT WORK IN THE INDUSTRY

By Gabi Spurlock:

Here at NCI, there are several folks actively working in organizations across the industry to impact the accessibility, artistry, and safety of fireworks. I spoke with my colleagues in those roles to learn more about their title in that organization. Speaking with each, I was able to take away a few key things that ran as common threads through each conversation. One, this team is passionate about being involved for the sake of making an impact, and the titles they have earned are proudly stewarded to accomplish that impact. Two, the industry is best supported when people just like you get involved. Since I am new to the industry, I set out to speak with our active leaders and find out:

1. How long have they been a part of the organization, and have they had any previous involvement?
2. What they're most passionate about in the role/organization.
3. What they're looking forward to seeing accomplished in that organization.
4. Who should be involved, and how do they get involved?

So, let's run the roster. First, Richard has been with the IFDA for more than 35 years, and my favorite thing he shared is the prominence of Indiana's state association. The level of participation from within Indiana is much greater than that of any other state. This is a testament to NCI's active history in the industry.

NATIONAL FIREWORKS ASSOCIATION

Kurt has been with the NFA, National Fireworks Association, as treasurer since 2022. When he first started at NCI, he went to the NFA tradeshow and has been back every year since. When I asked him what he was most passionate about in the role, he spoke highly of the networking value that has come from his time at the NFA tradeshow. Through attending the expo each year, he was able to create professional relationships, both with our customers and vendors and also with supplemental third-party vendors that are still impactful for business. AJ is also active with the NFA with the membership committee. This role takes the perspective of the general member to the board through decisions and communications that go out to the whole Association. Looking ahead, the NFA will continue to plan the annual tradeshow, and this is a great resource for anybody reading this newsletter, as it is the largest national fireworks tradeshow in the US for professionals and enthusiasts.

Finishing up the talk through NFA, I asked Kurt and AJ both what they were most excited about in the future of the organization. AJ is looking forward to seeing growth, seeing more people who work with fireworks step up and into involvement or memberships. Kurt and AJ both shared some current and future collaborations with APA. With new leadership in recent years, there has been a great opportunity for collaboration with aligned goals that help protect and bring growth to the industry.

AMERICAN PYROTECHNICS ASSOCIATION

Jeff is with the APA Code Committee and has been for the last 2 years. This piece of the APA helps shape the codes, rules, and regulations that impact the industry in regards to consumer and display fireworks. I asked Jeff what he was most passionate about in the role, and he said being able to protect the industry from unnecessary regulations and draft and maintain reasonable regulations. This kind of ownership over the accessibility of fireworks has held true with each NCI employee who's active across the industry. For the upcoming works, they are working to get Chapters 6 & 7 back into NFPA so it's updated and easily accessible. Currently, some authorities have to reference older publications for Chapters 6 & 7. These are important, especially for our wholesale customers, because it's policy that affects the storage and retail facilities. I've included the link the APA membership information for you to explore the benefits of getting involved!



Full voting membership:
\$395 a year

International Membership:
\$595 a year

Friends of Fireworks:
\$75 a year

www.nationalfireworks.com



www.americanpyro.com/benefits-of-membership

AMERICAN PYROTECHNIC SAFETY AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION

AJ was recently elected to the board in the APA in September of this year. AJ has worked within APA for a while now and has actively been part of the APSEF (American Pyrotechnic Safety and Education Foundation). This is a nonprofit piece that is passionate about educating children in the safety of fireworks. All of their resources are accessible online. The APSEF relies fully on donations to continue to do this work. Donations can be made, and all resources can be found on their website: celebratesafely.org. Also within the APA, there has been works of collaboration between the APA and NFA, a great representation of the way getting involved helps to make an impact in the industry to help reach goals that serve across the board for all. When I asked AJ about his passion to be involved, he shared he enjoyed being able to serve the industry as a whole. For him, being involved in so many pieces of the industry helps steward policies that keep fireworks accessible, safe, and legal. Also within the APA, Zach was recently appointed to the transportation committee. He shared this is the first professional role in the industry, outside of his position in NCI, and is excited to see the process in greater detail. The transportation committee helps shape and effect policy regarding the importing and domestic transportation of fireworks.



[www.americanpyro.com/
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AMERICAN FIREWORKS STANDARDS LABORATORY

Steven was recently elected to the American Fireworks Standards Laboratory (AFSL) board. This may be the most obscure role to our general NCI customer, but it's an impactful part of the industry. AFSL is a third-party testing facility that tests products for safe transportation and use. AFSL meets or exceeds all CPSC standards of product. This standard of safety makes a big impact across the industry because a safer product means fewer injuries, helping keep the industry in the right light. AFSL meets during the NFA tradeshow and during each APA convention. Listening in to these conversations is a great way to get involved. It's a great way to understand how the product makes it to the shelves in your store! For the last couple of years, Steven has been attending the AFSL meetings and getting involved. In September, he was elected to the board. Steven has been able to invest in a better understanding of the testing that goes into the safe and effective production of the fireworks we all love having imported. Since this organization is much more specialized than the others, being involved looks a little different. AFSL meets at APA twice a year, and the general membership is able to attend. AFSL also meets at NFA and hosts a keynote presentation. Showing up to any of these will give you a better understanding of the policies that help bring fireworks into the US and help educate you to be involved for the sake of safety, accessibility, and the ensured longevity of the industry as a whole.



www.afsl.org/

PYROTECHNICS GUILD INTERNATIONAL

The other role AJ holds is the VP of PGI. This is an association I knew very little of. AJ shared that a while back, he and Steven got involved with PGI as a way to better understand the science and thought behind each effect and display. PGI, Pyrotechnics Guild International, meets yearly and is geared towards real pyro-geeks who love to see the breakdown of the chemistry that creates displays across the sky. The time spent involved with PGI has directly impacted the variety and quality of products NCI brings to the stock list each year. Having this understanding has helped create unique, quality products with awesome displays.



www.pgi.org

Website: pgi.org

Continued on next page

What I've found to be the most interesting through each of these conversations boils down to a few succinct points:

1. Getting involved in the industry brings knowledge and connection that further develops business on several facets.
2. Getting involved helps put a voice behind the motion to keep fireworks legal, safe, and fun.
3. Better education about fireworks means less bad news about fireworks. Less bad news means less push for regulations and/or bans.

Although each of these organizations covers a different part of the industry, the overarching goal is the same: to foster an industry with beautiful, safe, magnificent displays powered by businessmen and women who know what's happening in their industry to have successful businesses that support celebrating safely and freely. This industry is not a necessity in the world we live in. It's an artistic expression to celebrate and demonstrate modern pyrotechnics in impressive ornamental displays. Coasting through is an option, but it's an option that could cost the industry as time goes on. Pick an organization you find a passion in and join; find a way to get involved and help bring others from the field into the ranks and help bridge the gap between your business and the government that creates policy over your business. Even if joining is not for you, you can check out the different organizations and view various online resources to stay informed.

Crabi

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MAY 10TH MUNCIE, INDIANA

2025

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTERS

As covered in the previous article, each organization is a great benefit to the members. To help fill our newsletter and demonstrate the value from each of these associations, here are some highlights from the most recent newsletters. These excerpts will help showcase the benefit and value of finding a good fit within one of the industry organizations to be involved.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NFA BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER (published December 2024):

- * In the letter from president Stacy Scvhneitter Blake, the work NFA has done with the CPSC and PHMSA is summarized to show the Associations involvement in advocating for the industry.
- * Her letter continues to express gratitude for the team helping support the association and also points out the NFA's support and involvement in the American Pyrotechnic Association's Safety & Education Foundation of the APA.
- * Looking to next year's expo, the NFA is meeting in Rogers, Arkansas (September 8-12, 2025) and requested members to share local businesses and vendors to share and support during the associations travel.
- * Throughout the Committee chat, spanning 4 pages, you can find a run down of the Financial Committee, Membership Committee, Government Affairs Committee, and Veterans Committee. This gave a breakdown of each committee and the current work they are doing.
- * The amended Organization Bylaws passed and is available to members now.
- * A page was also dedicated to an explanation of memberships, membership fees, and then a list of new members to welcome them.
- * Some of the fun parts of the newsletter included shared recipes, some industry favorite stories, a family-centric holiday activity, and an account of how to put an ad into the newsletter.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AFSL NEWSLETTER (issued November 2024):

- * At the APA's September 2024 convention, Alan Zoldan was awarded the Joel Anderson AFSL Fireworks Safety Award. Alan is the current president of the AFSL board.
- * Mike Ingram retires from the AFSL board after 24 years of service.
- * Two new members were also elected in September, Steven Irvin of NCI, and Michael Ingram Jr.
- * CPSC's top 100 list is recapped with a table of Product groupings and the number of estimated injuries associated with those groupings. Of the top 100 Hazardous products the CPSC reported, fireworks did not make the list.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE APA SPARKS NEWSLETTER

- * The APA registration is open for the Winter Education Conference. Held in Las Vegas, NV February 18-21, 2025. This will be full of info to prepare for the upcoming season and help you and your team grow professionally.
- * There are updated safety videos on the APSEF website that are also applicable to safe use during the winter holiday season.
- * Other excerpts from the APA newsletter included looking ahead to the new Administration in DC, last call for serving on APA committees, and a small memorial piece for 2 members who have passed in the recent months.





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ANGELIC WOOD
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DUSTIN ALEXANDER
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CUSTOMER SERVICE - 1ST SEASON

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2025 CONVENTION

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PGI:

WWW.PGI.ORG

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