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Fireworks require new permits

By Sara Strain
The Daily Iowan (U. Iowa)

IOWA CITY, Iowa — A new federal requirement on fireworks could leave some Fourth of July celebrations with fewer "oohs" and "ahhs."

Effective May 24, anyone who purchases or shoots off fireworks must have a permit from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. The requirement is part of the Safe Explosives Act, signed into law by President Bush in November 2002.

The law requires individuals buying and shooting fireworks to fill out an application, submit a photograph and fingerprints, and undergo a personal interview with bureau agents. The application costs \$25.

The permit is valid for one year and allows the holder to buy fire-

works six times within that year. However, the fireworks must be bought within the state of residence for the permit holder. The penalty for people convicted of possessing the devices without a permit is up to 10 years in prison and a fine.

The law does not affect what the bureau calls consumer fireworks, such as firecrackers and sparklers, said Senior Special Agent Larry Scott. He added that the permit does not allow the holder to purchase fireworks or explosives normally illegal in the state.

"They need to check with state and local laws and regulations," he said.

The law also exempts cities or other government groups from the requirement.

The law gives the bureau up to 90 days to process applications, but,

Scott said, the agency is working to process applications quickly in time for the Fourth of July.

Scott said the problem with the new law is that people looking to shoot fireworks only once a year have been caught unaware of the new government permit. The bureau's Kansas City office sent out news releases in April, he said, and many groups involved in fireworks were already aware, but news to one-time shooters has been spread by word of mouth.

Scott warned that because people are just finding out about the requirement, time is running short for the application process to be completed in time for the Fourth of July.

"The main thing now is the time is getting so critical," he said.

U-WIRE

Iran

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Romano Prodi, the president of the European Commission, the EU's governing arm. "If we fail to unite, every problem may become a crisis and every enemy a gigantic monster."

Bush tried humor to defuse tension over one sore point, the EU's ban on genetically altered food. After meeting with his guests in the Oval Office, Bush joked, "Let's go eat some genetically modified food for lunch."

Despite the cordial atmosphere, Prodi couldn't resist a dig at Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who angered European allies by dismissing antiwar sentiment as "Old Europe" thinking.

"Many people have said that Europe is too old. Maybe, but the old age helps us to understand our strengths and our weaknesses and the reality of the world," Prodi said.

Bush urged the European leaders to join his effort to cut off funding for the militant Islamic group Hamas. Although the United States has long

branded Hamas a terrorist group, France considers it a legitimate political and charitable organization.

Appearing with his European guests, the president expressed skepticism about reports that Hamas is ready to declare a moratorium on terrorist attacks against Israel.

"I'll believe it when I see it," Bush said, echoing Israeli statements. "In order for there to be peace (in the Middle East), Hamas must be dismantled."

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