



Tom Spader Photo

Standing before a State Police Bomb Squad truck, Detective James Everitt of the Dover Township Police Department (left) and Arson Investigator John Mount of the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office look over an explosive device yesterday.

### *Heightened fireworks fears*

# Holiday safety urged

By **BRIAN J. KELLEY**  
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**TOMS RIVER** — County officials, fearing an increase of potentially fatal accidents during the Fourth of July holiday weekend, have made prevention and safety "paramount" concerns this year.

Fearing a rise in the use of illegal fireworks, Freeholder Joseph H. Vicari, liaison to tourism and consumer affairs, held a press conference yesterday with law enforcement officials and the Department of Consumer Affairs to address the issue.

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One of the reasons for the press conference was the recent tragedy in Brick where a 12-year-old boy was killed while trying to make a crude rocket using gun powder at his home, Vicari said.

"A number of accidents have taken place with explosive devices, not only

with gun powder, but with chemicals," Vicari said. "Some of these are regular household chemicals, which left in their natural state would not bother anyone.

"But when you mix two or three of these chemicals together for use in an explosive device, they can cause an injury," he added.

Dover Township Police Detective James Everett said there has been a "significant" increase in the number of accidents involving fireworks and explosive devices over the last two years.

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# ★ Safety

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"Last year, there were more explosive-device incidents than there were arsons (in Dover)," Everett said.

There were between 15 and 20 incidents involving explosive devices in the township, he said.

Everett also referred to an incident at Toms River High School North in December 1993, when one adult and four juveniles narrowly escaped serious injury or death when they detonated an M-100 explosive device in a bathroom while classes were changing.

"The firework was detonated in a toilet bowl and it exploded into many, small pieces, some of which became embedded in the wall of the bathroom," said Everett.

The explosion forced one of the

victims out of the room, but he was saved from serious injury when the door closed behind him, he added.

Everett also said there was an increase in incidents involving pipe bombs and other explosive devices being placed in mailboxes.

"Fireworks prevention and public safety are paramount to all of us," said Stephanie Wauters, senior county assistant prosecutor. "We encourage the public to cooperate in keeping fireworks out of the hands of children."

It is illegal to possess, sell or use sparklers, novelty items such as trick matches, noise makers and smoke grenades, and firecrackers, roman candles and rockets in New Jersey, according to the State Police.

On the roads this holiday weekend, law enforcement officials plan intensive enforcement and prevention efforts.

Police will staff checkpoints for intoxicated drivers and additional controls on major roads throughout

the county, said Joseph Janosko, a supervising assistant prosecutor with the fatal accident unit of the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office.

In cooperation with the Dover Township Police Department, the prosecutor's office will be conducting "intensive and supplemental" stationary and moving patrols in marked and unmarked cars, he said.

Officers will be checking for travelers driving while intoxicated, speeding, and with unrestrained children in their vehicles, Janosko said.

A similar operation over Memorial Day weekend netted "close to 100" summonses in a nine-hour period, he said.

Janosko said his advice to holiday drivers is, "Slow down, buckle up, and don't drive drunk."

For the first six months of 1995, there have been 26 deaths on county roads, "substantially less" than this time in 1994, Janosko said.