

ISSUE  
**42**  
APR 2026

**GREAT GRIZZLY**

# TIMES



Preparing for  
**AMERICA'S**  
**250<sup>TH</sup>**

**Get Ready for Stars, Stripes & Sales**

**Plus**  
**A Wonderful**  
**Life with**  
**Fireworks**  
*The Joys of Fireworks Season*

**GrizVision**  
**Showcase Your Stock!**



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NCI North Central Industries



## President's Letter

# Celebrating 250 Years of July 4<sup>th</sup>

## A Historic Fourth Brings Historic Potential

All fireworks importers and retailers have been anticipating the 2026 anniversary year fireworks season with high expectations. With that anniversary season now on the horizon, there is much more hype than in a typical fireworks season.

Facts are facts. A Saturday holiday, a good supply of product, and the highly anticipated 250th anniversary create a potent recipe for an above-average sales season. As we get closer to the actual holiday, current events will play a larger role in determining how much spending money consumers will have for their July 4th celebrations. This will likely decide whether sales increases are modest or if this truly becomes a season to remember.

We are excited to be in the fireworks business as we celebrate 250 years as a country. I am confident this will be a truly monumental holiday and believe that most Americans will find a way to be involved in this historic event. As we get closer to the celebration, we are likely to see a once-in-a-lifetime commemoration of the founding of the United States of America. Let's hope 2026 brings a renewed sense of patriotism and reinstills pride in the principles on which the USA was founded.

There is little doubt that an increased emphasis on fireworks will be obvious during the 250th celebration. It certainly gives all of us in the American fireworks industry a great sense of pride to see our efforts take center stage. Many of the larger firms have been in the fireworks business for several generations. Additionally, companies like Walt Disney have helped elevate the entertainment side by using display and specialty fireworks to enhance visual and musical presentations. Spectacular fireworks shows have moved indoors and are often paired with big-name musical entertainment.

Consumer fireworks are now available to most Americans. These devices provide whatever type of personal July 4th celebration the user wants to create. Americans have long celebrated July 4th with friends, family, and fireworks. The consumer fireworks industry relies on the continuation of this tradition to thrive and prosper. At NCI, we strive to produce consumer devices that meet the high demands of fireworks enthusiasts as well as the needs of the occasional, once-a-year buyer.

NCI is excited to offer a considerable number of unique products that are directly linked to the 250th anniversary. Many of these devices feature traditional red, white, and blue scripted performances that fully embrace the patriotic theme of the holiday. Others are labeled to take advantage of the 250th anniversary buzz but, in reality, introduce new effects and combinations that enhance the visual excitement consumers want to see and buy.

This season will be a memorable one for the entire fireworks industry. We have an abundance of new products and effects. Check out our online catalog and order fulfillment options. As always, one of our associates will be glad to help you find the items that will make this sales season meet and exceed your expectations!



**Richard B. Shields**

Owner/President



**CONGRATULATIONS RICHARD!**

Cheers to 50 incredible seasons and no grand finale in sight! Thank you for leading the way.

The Entire North Central Team




# It's a Wonderful Life with Fireworks!

## A Labor of Love to Light the Night Sky

The sun is out, warmer temperatures are upon us, trees and flowers are blooming, families are stepping out of hibernation, and we are on our way to the big celebration happening this summer! The fireworks industry will be an irreplaceable part of America's 250th birthday celebration, and although we've faced many supply chain challenges, it's evident to me that we are ready to help everyone who wants to celebrate with fireworks do so in a big way.

Fireworks are ingrained in the fabric of many annual events and celebrations. Sometimes, being in the business, it is easy to forget why people buy fireworks, but among those reasons are the emotion, excitement, and camaraderie they bring to crowds both small and large. A family of four can make memories in their backyard that will leave an impression for years to come, just as a thunderous artistic display in front of thousands can elicit roaring cheers and awe.

Everything in between is a labor of love for those of us in this small industry. More than 20,000 containers of fireworks are imported to the U.S. annually, which puts into perspective the level of demand for these goods. These items travel by boat, train, and truck before arriving at our warehouse. Once they arrive, they are offloaded by hand, sorted, stored, and prepared for sale.

Many times, they are purchased by a reseller and taken to an outlet for retail display. This is the product's time to shine and sell itself when customers fill the store to make their selections. Sometimes the layouts are simple and small, but other times the products shine in large stores that feature screens displaying their performance and allowing customers to see what they are buying (i.e., Griz Vision). One thing people who work in fireworks know is that when customers come in to shop, most of them are excited, happy, and eager to buy. They want to see value, and they are anticipating purchasing something entertaining.

Customers are proud to walk out with their sacks, carts, and more. If the product labels are fun, edgy, unique, premium, bright, and colorful, they become a "show and tell" for anyone curious to see and hear about the upcoming festivities. Seasoned customers always make sure to pick up some pre-game snaps and sparklers to keep the younger ones occupied before dark. As the sun fades, it's time to set up the show. This is a great time to remember to celebrate safely and always be mindful of your surroundings—more information is available at [www.celebratesafely.org](http://www.celebratesafely.org).

Before we know it, there are colors, crackles, sizzles, pops, bangs, booms, and flashes lighting up the sky. If you take a moment to look around, everyone is happy, giggling, and excited. Then, after a well-timed pause, a brilliant finale with hammer reports hits perfectly, and everyone's hearts skip a beat as the sky fades to black. That moment of emotion—and the excitement, eagerness, and anticipation leading up to it—is what drives consumer fireworks sales and turns spectators into customers for life.

Wishing You All a Very Successful & Celebratory Season!

**KURT**

**Kurt Cowgill**

Vice President



**THE SECOND MOST FUN YOU CAN HAVE IN THE DARK!**

SCAN HERE TO EXPLORE THE NEWEST ADDITION TO OUR BRAND COLLECTION!





Upgrade Your Retail Experience With

# GRIZVISION

Now Available - Order Today!



**SIMPLE  
SCAN • PLAY  
SYSTEM**

**LET YOUR  
CUSTOMERS  
SEE THE PRODUCT  
BEFORE THEY  
BUY IT!**

## GRIZVISION FEATURES

- Wall Mountable
- No Internet Required
- Simple to Use Interface
- Durable for Heavy Traffic
- Wireless Scanning Options
- Adapts to Play Top Products



North Central Industries is pleased to announce that GrizVision, our in-store product education kiosk for fireworks retailers, is now available for purchase through your NCI representative. After a strong reception with our test customers, we are ready to ship units to dealers across our network.

GrizVision delivers a modern point-of-sale experience by combining a looping fireworks demo display with instant barcode-activated video playback. Customers can scan products and immediately watch performance video, helping them compare items and make confident purchasing decisions, acting as additional "salespeople". Units arrive pre-loaded with NCI product videos, and additional content can be added at any time via USB.

A key capability in GrizVision is its Adaptive Loop engine. Rather than cycling through a fixed playlist, the system learns from customer scan activity over time. Products that are frequently scanned are automatically weighted to appear more often in the ambient loop, keeping the display aligned with what shoppers are interested in. For larger stores running multiple GrizVision units, this becomes especially powerful — each unit independently adapts based on the scan behavior near its location, so units naturally begin to reflect the products physically surrounding them. The result is a store-wide system that organically distributes product representation across the sales floor rather than every unit running the same loop.

GrizVision is engineered for the demands of fireworks retail — running fully offline for reliable performance in tents, temporary structures, and locations with limited connectivity. Hardware is built to handle high-traffic seasonal environments, and the interface is straightforward enough that no technical expertise is required to operate or update.

To complement the base unit, NCI offers a growing line of GrizVision accessories including a wall mount bracket for permanent retail installations and wireless scanner options for extended-reach scanning, supporting human salespeople working the floor. These accessories allow the system to be configured for a wide range of store layouts and setups, and future development with afford expanded capability.

GrizVision is available now. Contact your NCI sales representative to place an order or scan the QR code to visit the product page.

## Global Fireworks Supply Update

# China Outlook What to Know Heading Into the Season

As we get closer to the season, one of the biggest factors affecting the fireworks market right now is global supply—especially for products coming out of China.

China is still where almost all consumer fireworks are made, and production itself has been stable. What has changed is logistics. With the situation in the Middle East, particularly involving Iran, shipping has become more expensive and less predictable. Routes are being adjusted, insurance costs are higher, and all of this ultimately impacts both the final cost and delivery timing.

On the positive side, Chinese New Year sales this year were lower than what we've seen in the past few years. This means factories have more availability than usual, giving us a better opportunity to secure production and keep things moving for the season.

At North Central Industries, we work closely with our partners in China to secure production early and stay ahead of potential disruptions. Early visibility into demand helps us avoid delays during peak season.

If you have any questions about timing or product availability, please don't hesitate to reach out.

*Nico S*

**Nico Souza**

International Business Manager



## EXPLORE OUR BRAND NEW INTERACTIVE SHOW BUILDER



VISIT GREATGRIZZLY.COM TO BROWSE OUR MASSIVE SELECTION OF HEAVY HITTING, HIGH PERFORMANCE CAKES AND ARTILLERY SHELLS AND BUILD YOUR VERY OWN SHOW!



CONTACT YOUR SALES REPRESENTATIVE TODAY TO DISCOVER HOW YOU CAN OFFER THE SHOW BUILDER TO YOUR CUSTOMERS!



# Introductions

## SKYLER BEINDORF

I'm excited to introduce myself as the new Technology Support Specialist here at NCI in Muncie, Indiana. I bring over five years of IT experience, along with a bachelor's degree from Trine University. Since joining the team, I've been focused on finalizing the Griz Vision project, and I'm eager to continue advancing technology across the organization to make everyone's daily work easier and more efficient.



Outside of the office, I'm a proud father to my five-year-old son, who is quickly becoming a big fan of fireworks and is especially excited about my new role in the industry. When the weather is nice, our favorite activity is going fishing together.

I'm thrilled to learn more about the fireworks industry and look forward to working with all of you. I'm eager to collaborate, support our technology needs, and help drive improvements that benefit the entire team. I look forward to getting to know everyone better!

# Roll Call

**RICHARD B. SHIELDS**  
PRESIDENT/OWNER - 50TH SEASON

**KURT COWGILL**  
VICE PRESIDENT - 20TH SEASON

**STEVE IRVIN**  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS - 11TH SEASON

**AJ BURNS**  
AREA SALES MANAGER - 10TH SEASON

**ANGELIC WOOD**  
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - 11TH SEASON

**GABI SPURLOCK**  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT - 3RD SEASON

**EMILY BINFORD**  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - 2ND SEASON

**SKYLER BEINDORF**  
TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT SPECIALIST - 1ST SEASON

**SEAN ALEXANDER**  
WAREHOUSE MANAGER - 28TH SEASON

**DUSTIN ALEXANDER**  
ASST. WAREHOUSE MANAGER - 6TH SEASON

**BRENDA SAID**  
PRODUCTION MANAGER - 29TH SEASON

**ZACH ROYAL**  
TRANSPORTATION MANAGER - 5TH SEASON

**NICO SOUZA**  
INT'L BUSINESS MANAGER - 4TH SEASON

## GEORGIA DIVISON

**JEFF BRANDENBURG**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES - 10TH SEASON

**ANGELA BRANDENBURG**  
REGIONAL MANAGER - 9TH SEASON

**TYLER BRANDENBURG**  
SALES AND DISTROBUTION MANAGER - 9TH SEASON

**TREVOR BRANDENBURG**  
DISTRICT SALES MANAGER - 9TH SEASON

**SANDRA JIMENEZ**  
SR. ACCOUNTING CLERK - 8TH SEASON

**MARIA STEPHENS**  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - 6TH SEASON

**ADRIAN GONZALES**  
WAREHOUSE MANAGER - 6TH SEASON

**JOHN FEIGERT**  
SALES REPRESENTATIVE - 9TH SEASON

**GISELA RAMIREZ**  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - 2ND SEASON

# Price List Delivery Changes



We will no longer send printed price lists to all customers automatically. Our Pricing is now updated regularly, so a once-a-year printed list may become outdated. This ensures that we can consistently provide the best prices to our entire customer base. We're committed to providing pricing in the format that works best for your business.

You can request a current printed price list at any time. To request:

Email: [gabi@greatgrizzly.com](mailto:gabi@greatgrizzly.com)  
(Attn: 2026 Catalog Request)

Live pricing is available 24/7 on our website, and we also have electronic price and stock availability lists that can be e-mailed by request via phone or email to your Sales or Customer Service Representative.

# Dates + Details

## AMERICAN PYROTECHNICS SAFETY & EDUCATION FOUNDATION

AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION  
JULY 4TH 2026  
[WWW.CELEBRATESAFLY.COM](http://WWW.CELEBRATESAFLY.COM)

## PYROTECHNICS GUILD INTERNATIONAL

2026 CONVENTION - KAUKAUNA, WI  
AUGUST 8-14, 2026  
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:  
[WWW.PGI.ORG](http://WWW.PGI.ORG)

## NATIONAL FIREWORKS ASSOCIATION

NFA FALL EXPO - FORT WAYNE, IN  
SEPTEMBER 13-19, 2026  
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:  
[NATIONALFIREWORKS.COM](http://NATIONALFIREWORKS.COM)

## AMERICAN PYROTECHNICS ASSOCIATION

2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE - ORLANDO, FL  
SEPTEMBER 26 - OCTOBER 2, 2026  
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:  
[AMERICANPYRO.COM](http://AMERICANPYRO.COM)