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## Downhill rocket ride goes awry

Sledder suffers burns after booster strapped to his back is ignited

*MIKE MARTINDALE*

*The Detroit News*

*Independence Township* – Call it an idea that went downhill fast.

A 62-year-old township man was recovering Monday from burns suffered when deputies said he apparently tried to turn himself into a human rocket during a weekend sledding party.

Oakland County Sheriff's deputies were called to the 6700 block of Townview Drive about 7:30 p.m. Saturday on a reported injury from a possible fireworks incident. Investigators say the injured man has an annual sledding party at his home and is known for doing "crazy" things at the get-togethers.

"It sounds like he was trying to outdo himself and obviously this was not a safe choice," Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said. "I think it shows we should leave 'Rocket Man' to the movies. ... It's fortunate someone wasn't more seriously hurt."

After consuming an "unknown quality of alcohol," the man built a device out of a motorcycle muffler and pipe and stuffed it with gunpowder, match heads and gasoline. He donned a plastic garbage bag like a cape and a motorcycle helmet, and strapped the muffler/pipe device to his back. He asked someone to light a fuse to the apparatus as he began to sled down a hill.

The device exploded at some point during his brief sled ride, witnesses said.

The victim suffered injuries to 18 percent of his body, including second-degree burns to his face and along his right side. He had significant damage to one of his eyes that will require further treatment. He was reported in good condition at a local hospital Monday, possibly to be discharged by today.

The investigation remains open for possible criminal charges, deputies said.

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