

Last-ditch effort to find eclipse glasses could be pricey

Carlos R. Munoz | August 20, 2017

Some families interested in watching the eclipse together didn't realize most eclipse glasses and alternatives are sold out locally.

SARASOTA — A man who pre-ordered a box of eclipse glasses from a reputable seller online is warning parents to check the quality of their solar glasses if they ordered online.

The seller canceled the order Jack Jacobs, 77, of Anna Maria Island, placed nearly two weeks ago because they were mixed with counterfeit lenses. He is now hustling to find a pair to wear for tomorrow's once-in-a-lifetime space event.

In Sarasota, the partial eclipse — around 80 percent — will begin at approximately 1:18 p.m., peak at 2:50 p.m., and end at 4:14 p.m.

"I was being fussy to get ones with the proper seal of approval," Jacobs said. "They halted the shipment because they discovered it was a mixed batch. They didn't want to send out glasses that would cause eye damage."

Jacobs appreciates the unnamed company's concern, but is frustrated. His wife is traveling to Georgia to watch the eclipse with family who did receive their box of certified glasses. It might be too late to next-day air a pair to Jacobs. He is considering his alternatives.

"I know how to build a viewing box," Jacobs said. "That's a last resort. I'm not going to live long enough to see another one. I might make the investment (in expensive welder's glasses)."

He didn't have to waste the money, a man later came forward to sell Jacobs a pair of eclipse glasses.

NASA recommends that only Shade 14 welder's glasses be used to view the eclipse and says "don't even think about using Shade 12."

The welder's glasses can retail for \$50 to \$100, but NASA says they can be too dark for viewing. Shade 13 are adequate, but hard to find the space agency says.

Both Lowe's and Home Depot said they do not have Shade 14 welding glasses — both said they only carried a welder's helmet/shield that cost \$180. Most can only be purchased at a welding supply store, none of which were open Sunday.

Jacobs said before he caves and pours money into glasses he'll only use once, he's checking places like the Facebook Marketplace where people were selling eclipse glasses for anywhere between \$5 and \$50. As of Sunday, most of the sellers on the Marketplace had vanished.

"I had no idea that everybody and his brother would be watching this thing," Jacobs said. "I went to 7-Eleven stores, they were out. When I went back when the truck was to have been here, the truck came in with no glasses."

The experience has left Jacobs in the dark, but mostly concerned for families who could be donning a dangerous pair of glasses.

Will you pay the price?

Families are split on whether they should pitch in to purchase the eclipse glasses from third parties — some worried about the quality of the eye wear.

Andrea Rincon, 17, of Columbia who lives in Sarasota was with her family at Payne Park. She said that she is going to watch the eclipse on a rooftop with friends, but is still hunting for glasses.

"I know it's very rare. I've never seen a solar eclipse myself, so I think it'd be cool to see," Rincon said. "I think it's cool it's something that we can all see together."



She has not started looking for glasses.

Jeff Wilson, 54, of Tampa was with his children, Jackie, 11, and Claire, 9, who said some of their friends think the eclipse will be boring.

“They aren’t really into cool science stuff. We really like science,” Claire said. “The earth, the moon, and the sun line up in one spot.”

Their father said they will be in school when the eclipse begins, and he will likely watch from the beach. He said he likely won’t pay the cost of the eclipse glasses being hawked online.

“I think it’s a little silly but people are really getting into it because a lot of people like my kids have never seen anything like that,” said Wilson who was 16 during the last solar eclipse visible in the United States. “It’s fun for people, I guess — it’s a big event.”

The website timeanddate.com says the first total eclipse of the sun visible from the United States, excluding Alaska and Hawaii was Feb. 26, 1979. The last total eclipse visible coast-to-coast was June 8, 1918 (99 years ago).

Jackie and Claire said their favorite part about outer space is the stars.

“They are kind of like floaty fireballs,” Jackie said.

“I like wondering if there is a place with people on it,” Claire said.

Nick Reynolds of Sarasota was at Payne Park with his children. The family will view the eclipse safely on TV, or websites like NASA.gov or EarthCam.com.

When asked if the the father of three plans to try to purchase the over-priced eclipse glasses online, he replied, “Nah.”

“I guess it’s kind of cool. It’s not something that happens everyday,” Reynolds said. “I’m not going to go out of my way (to watch it).

“It’s interesting to say you were able to witness something like that.”