



Hosting a Bonfire and Firework Display



Fireworks, be safe not sorry.

Don't cut corners just to save money. Always buy fireworks from a reputable shop to make sure that they conform to British Standards. This means that they should have BS 7114 written on the box.

Sometimes shops open up for a short time before Bonfire Night but these may not be the best places to buy fireworks from. Staff in these shops might not be very knowledgeable about using fireworks safely and their fireworks might not meet British Standards. Whatever you do, don't buy fireworks from anywhere you're not sure about, such as the back of a van or from a temporary, unlicensed market stall.

What to buy

There are different categories of fireworks. Members of the public can buy and set off most of the fireworks that come under Categories 1 to 3. These are fireworks that you can use indoors, in your garden or at a display. Always read the packet carefully and make sure that the fireworks you buy are suitable for the place where you are going to set them off.

Professional fireworks

Some fireworks can only be bought and used by firework professionals. These include: air bombs; aerial shells, aerial maroons, shells-in-mortar and maroons-in-mortar; all bangers; mini rockets; fireworks with erratic flight; some Category 2 and 3 fireworks which exceed certain size limits; and all Category 4 fireworks.

Setting them off

Only one person should be in charge of fireworks. If that's you, then make sure you take all the necessary precautions. Read the instructions in daylight and don't drink any alcohol until they've all been discharged.

On the night, you will need:

1. a torch
2. a bucket of water
3. eye protection and gloves
4. a bucket of soft earth to put fireworks in
5. suitable supports and launchers if you're setting off catherine wheels or Rockets

The Firework Code

- Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.
- Dispose of sparklers in a bucket of water as soon as they are finished.
- **Never** give sparklers to a child under five.
- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box or tin. Use them one at a time, replacing the lid immediately.
- Follow the instructions on each firework, using a torch or hand lamp. Never use a naked flame.
- Light fireworks at arm's length using a taper.

- Do not drink alcohol if setting off fireworks.
- Stand well back.
- Never go back to a lit firework, even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode.
- Never put fireworks in your pocket.
- Never throw fireworks.
- Keep pets indoors, leave a light and a radio on or get someone to stay with them.

Fireworks—Keep children safe

Children suffer over half of all firework injuries and many of these are babies and toddlers. Children's scars may heal but the trauma for them and their parents can last for years.

Did you know that sparklers get five times hotter than cooking oil? Remember sparklers are not toys.

- Never give sparklers to under fives.
- Never hold a baby or child if you have a sparkler in your hand.
- Always supervise young children closely.
- Supervise all children carefully and keep them well back from the bonfire and fireworks.
- Show older children how to hold sparklers - away from their body and at arm's length - and teach them not to wave them at other people or run while holding them.
- Avoid dressing children in loose or flowing clothes that could catch alight easily, and give children gloves to wear when holding sparklers.
- Store sparklers and other fireworks in a closed box in a cool, dry place.
- Always light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.
- Plunge finished sparklers hot end down into a bucket of water as soon as they have burnt out.
- Remember, sparklers can stay hot for a long time.
- Don't take sparklers to public displays. It will be too crowded to use them safely.

In an emergency cool the burn or scald with cold water for at least 10 minutes. Cut around material sticking to the skin - don't pull it off. Don't touch the burn or burst any blisters. Cover the burn with clean, non-fluffy material - clingfilm is ideal - to prevent infection.

If clothing catches fire, get the person to stop, drop to the floor and roll them in heavy material like a curtain.

Seek advice from your doctor or accident and emergency department at your local hospital.

Fireworks—Keep Pets Safe

Although fireworks are fun for us, they are not fun for animals. Most animals get very scared by the lights and noise, so you should take precautions to protect your pets during the times of the year when fireworks are likely to be set off.

The best thing you can do is to keep your pets indoors. This includes bringing in pets that are normally kept outside, such as rabbits or guinea pigs. Close all of your windows and doors and try to drown out the noise as much as possible. And make sure that cats and dogs have name tags on them in case the noise scares them and they run off.

Firework Display

The following information is good practice for a larger event. However, the same principles will apply to a smaller display, such as those held in your back garden. For the larger events a template risk assessment is included in this document.

Picking the right location

You should choose a large, clear and well-mown area free from obstructions, well away from any buildings, trees and hazards like overhead cables. There should be as many safe entrances and exits as possible, which must be away from the firing area and dropping zone.

The firing area should be at least 50m x 20m and beyond this you will need a dropping zone for spent fireworks of 100m x 50m in the downwind direction.

Crowd control

- Spectators should be kept back on the opposite side to the dropping zone at least 25m from the firing area, so proper crowd control is essential and needs good planning.
- Arrange for some stewards.
- Take great care at all times.
- Plan your display in advance.
- Do not allow smoking.
- Before lighting any firework, read the instructions on it carefully by torchlight.
- Make sure that the wind blows away from spectators.
- The display should be angled away from spectators.
- Never use matches or lighters for lighting fire works at a display.
- A sudden change of wind could cause aerial fireworks to fall dangerously among spectators and in very windy weather you should consider putting off the display altogether, however disappointing that might be.

Arrange for fire extinguishers, buckets of water, buckets of sand and metal litter bins to be available on the night.

Check that plenty of electric torches will be available on the night, with full batteries.

Publicise the fact that spectators are not allowed to bring their own fireworks, including sparklers.

Draw up a detailed checklist of tasks and indicate who is to be responsible for each one. Check whether you are adequately insured to cover any firework-related injuries to those present at the display.

Think about fire safety and also the pollution bonfires can create.

Firework curfew

Recent changes to the law mean that fireworks can't be set off between 11 pm and 7 am (apart from on 5 November, New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year and Diwali, when the curfew ends at 1 am). Hopefully this curfew will keep to a minimum the times when animals and people are disturbed by fireworks.

The Law

New legislation has been introduced to help to make fireworks safer to use and to tackle their deliberate misuse. It affects how fireworks are imported, sold and used, and places restrictions on possession. As a consumer, you along with retailers, have new responsibilities.

Legislation and you

Fireworks will only be widely available during the weeks leading up to Bonfire Night and a few days before New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year. For the rest of the year, you will only be able to buy fireworks from shops that are licensed to supply them.

The laws concerning fireworks

1. It is illegal for anyone under 18 to possess a firework in a public place.
2. Fireworks cannot be set off by a private individual between 11.00pm and 7.00am except for certain nights of the year.
3. Unless retailers possess a special licence they may only sell fireworks from 15 October to 10 November and 26 to 31 December.

Take care with bonfires

When celebrating Bonfire Night, remember to be careful with bonfires as well as fireworks. It is much better to manage without a bonfire, but if you do, make sure it is well away from your house and any trees, hedges, fences or sheds.

- **Private bonfires (for example, in your back garden)**

Bonfires should be built at least 18 metres (50 feet) from things such as buildings, trees and fences. They should be no more than 3 metres high for private events and should not be built under overhead cables.

- **Organised bonfires and firework displays (for example, at a community centre or public house)**

Running a display takes a lot of work, so try to share the load by planning ahead. Set up a committee whose members can each take responsibility for a particular task, including one person to be in charge of all safety arrangements.

General bonfire safety

- Don't site it too near your display or firework storage area and don't site it anywhere near fences or trees.
- Never use flammable liquids like paraffin or petrol to get it going, as this can result in uncontrolled spread of fire or explosion.
- Check immediately before lighting that there is no animal or a young child hidden inside.
- Don't burn dangerous rubbish, such as aerosols, paint tins or foam filled furniture.
- Remove any rubbish from your bonfire area in advance so nothing can be thrown onto the fire on the night.
- After the event the bonfire needs to be put out completely before you leave the site.
- Plan, that when it is safe, to remove all the debris of the fire from the site.
- Erect a fence or barrier about the bonfire to prevent people being injured by hazardous hot embers.

Remember:

Avoid anti-social behaviour, act as a responsible citizen, take care of the young, elderly & animals.

Only use fireworks safely. Make sure fireworks are only bought in boxes & follow the Firework Code this means that you should, for example:

- Do not drink alcohol if setting off fireworks
- Keep fireworks in a closed box
- Never go near a firework that has been lit. Even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode
- Never put fireworks in your pocket or throw them
- Always supervise children around fireworks
- Keep pets indoors

References:

1. Working together on firework displays (A guide to safety for firework display organisers and operators). HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 0835 2.
2. Giving your own firework display (How to run and fire it safely). HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 0836 0.
3. Fireworks need handling with care (A guide to organising firework displays). DTI pamphlet.
4. Fireworks at home need handling with care. DTI pamphlet. 5 steps to risk assessment (A step by step guide to a safer and healthier workplace). HSE IND(G)163L.
5. Managing crowds safely HSE HS(G) 154

For further advice or information please contact a member of the Health and Safety Team on the contact details below.

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Template Risk Assessment

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | What further action is necessary? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
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