

**FIREWORKS  
BE SAFE  
NOT SORRY  
ALWAYS FOLLOW THE CODE**

**BIS** | Department for Business  
Innovation & Skills

**FIREWORKS SAFETY**



## Be media wise!

---

Your campaigning efforts play an important part in raising awareness and promoting the issue of firework safety across the country.

Make sure that your campaign team gets the credit it deserves and spreads its message as far as possible by letting your local media know what you are doing!

---

### **Ideas to help you get started**

If you have run campaigns in the past you will know what works. If, however, you are new to firework safety campaigning, these ideas will help.

Remember that the local media like local stories about local people.

- Set up a working group of organisations in your area such as Trading Standards, Fire Service, Police, the Local Education Authority, the local NHS Trust and PR professionals. Working together with one person appointed as media spokesperson gives continuity and strength to your campaign message.
- Find a local celebrity – perhaps a footballer – who is prepared to make some local school visits to talk about firework safety. And tell the media what’s happening – they always like a celebrity story and your campaign will get good free publicity.
- Speak to your local hospital and see if there is a surgeon who has treated a child with a firework injury, or a parent with an injured child. Arrange a media photo call to get the firework safety message across.
- Speak to your local Trading Standards department. If they are arranging tests on dubious fireworks, ask the media along to watch.
- Talk to your local paper and see if they will get involved with a competition to design a firework safety poster.
- Ask your local Fire Service to set up a demonstration on how easily and fast accidents involving fires and fireworks can happen. Dressing up an old dummy and setting it alight to show how fast clothes burn is always powerful. Remember to ask the media along to cover it.

- Involve local DJs and radio presenters and ask them to promote your campaign message on air. This can include interviews with people involved in firework safety such as fire officers.
- Try to involve a local sports club in some way. Messages on electronic score boards at sports events are very powerful and can attract media coverage.
- Use the Speaking Notes fact sheet inside this toolkit to help you when you are giving interviews.

---

## Reminders

Accident statistics are not just boring tables of figures – they can be used by the media to show how local accident figures relate to those in other areas. If a particular area had the highest number of injuries, for example, it could lead to a local newspaper running its own campaign to cut down on the number of people hurt.

Under the provisions of the Fireworks Regulations 2004 it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to possess fireworks in a public place and it is illegal to sell fireworks to the under 18s. And remember – sparklers should never be given to the under fives. Make sure parents and guardians are aware of this through your campaign message.

Use the media to remind retailers and the public about fireworks and the law by telling them that:

- It is illegal to sell bangers
- Retailers must to have a licence to supply fireworks all year round
- It is illegal to set fireworks off between 11pm and 7am except in the following cases:

November 5th – until midnight

New Year's Eve – 1am on the following day

Chinese New Year – 1am on the following day

Diwali – 1am on the following day

- Retailers should display the poster about underage sale and possession.
- As with alcohol, it is the retailer's responsibility to actively check that they are not supplying fireworks to under 18s.
- Retailers breaking the law could receive a fine of up to £5,000 and/or up to three months imprisonment.

# Giving talks?

---

## **THESE NOTES MAY HELP YOU GET THE FIREWORK SAFETY MESSAGE ACROSS**

You may wish to choose sections of these speaking notes if you are planning a talk on firework safety. Please make sure that the sections you pick are relevant to your audience. Pick out those sections which will interest them and involve them in your presentation. For example, ask them to provide information and answers, such as “where should pets be while you’re setting off your fireworks?” or “where did fireworks originate?”

---

### **A brief history of fireworks (Audience – any)**

Legend has it that the Chinese made the first fireworks in the 800s, filling bamboo shoots with gunpowder and exploding them at New Year with the hope the sound would scare away evil spirits.

Fireworks became known in Europe during the 1300s, probably after returning Crusaders brought them back from the East.

In this country, fireworks are used to celebrate November 5 – the anniversary of Guy Fawkes’ (failed) attempt to blow up Parliament.

Other countries use fireworks for different celebrations:

- People living in the USA mark the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4 with parties and firework displays across the country.
- The French celebrate the French Revolution of 1789 and the storming of the Bastille on July 14 with parties, parades and fireworks.
- In China, the New Year falls about a month after our own and involves a two-week long celebration, with an outdoor festival of lanterns and firecrackers being let off to scare away evil spirits.
- Many Indians celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Light, in the last week of October or the first week of November, with parties and fireworks.
- The Jewish equivalent is Hanukkah which falls around December or January. Candles, fireworks and the exchanging of gifts are important parts of this festival.
- In Canada fireworks are let off to mark Canada Day on July 1 and the country holds an annual World Fireworks Championship.

---

## **Fascinating facts about fireworks (Audience – any, particularly schools)**

Does anyone know what temperature a firework burns at? Well, a simple sparkler reaches a temperature of up to 2,000°C. That's 20 times the boiling point of water. That's why we constantly have to remind people to be so careful with any type of firework. It is particularly important never to give sparklers to children under 5 and to supervise the over 5s.

**How fast does a firework travel?...Typically a rocket can reach 150 miles an hour.**

**And how high can a firework go?...Well, a shell fired from a mortar will go as high as 200 metres.**

A couple more facts from the Guinness Book of Records: The largest ever single firework was a shell which measured one metre across and travelled over 300 metres into the air. It was so big and powerful, it had to be launched from a specially constructed launch pad made of concrete and steel.

And the record for the biggest number of rockets ever let off in one go was set in August 2006 when more than 56,000 rockets were launched simultaneously at the National Firework Championships in Plymouth.

---

## **Injuries caused by accidents with fireworks (Audience – any)**

Fireworks cause hundreds of avoidable injuries every year.

In the six years between 2000 and 2005 (the last year for which statistics were collected) 6,637 people were hurt and required hospital treatment. In the same period there were two deaths, in 2005 there were 990 injuries. In 2005 the highest number of injuries – 475 – occurred at family or private parties, followed by incidents in the street or other public places and large public displays.

The most common firework injuries in 2005 were caused by rockets (216), air bombs (111) and sparklers (104).

Before you start thinking that it's not going to happen to you, consider this. Around half of all injuries happen to children under the age of 16 years. That's a lot of kids who may have ugly burn scars – for life.

---

## **Common sense is important (Audience – any)**

Every year we see injuries that are caused through people not handling fireworks properly. And it's always because simple common sense rules about handling fireworks are forgotten. Here are some of the main causes of injury:

- Not following instructions – if you are going to let off fireworks in the garden follow the instructions very carefully.

- Lighting too many fireworks at once – this doesn't give you time to get out of the way. Sparklers should only be lit one at a time and, like other fireworks, always by an adult. A bunch of sparklers lit together can result in a flame travelling up the sparklers and burning your hand.
  - Going back to a firework once it's been lit – everyone has heard of the dangers of going back to a lit firework that you don't think has ignited, but then it flares up as you approach it. But people still chance their luck. So remember, it's just not worth the risk.
  - Lack of supervision – in the garden there should be one adult in charge of lighting fireworks. And, don't take your own fireworks to organised events as letting fireworks off in a crowd is extremely dangerous. That includes sparklers.
  - Getting too close to fireworks – there are guidelines about the safe distances spectators should stand away from fireworks. Be aware of this – and remember – nobody should ever put them in their pockets.
- 

### **Remember, remember**

- If you are using sparklers, have a bucket of water nearby. When sparklers have gone out they should be put hot end down in the water.
  - Never throw discarded fireworks on bonfires. Some spent fireworks still have gunpowder left in them and some fireworks which have not gone off will still contain all their explosives. Throwing them on bonfires can result in accidents.
  - Make sure you wear the right clothing – you should always wear gloves (especially when holding sparklers). Do not wear nylon clothing, which melts against the skin, and don't wear open neck shirts, T-shirts or shorts where bare skin is exposed to the danger of fireworks. Remember to tuck scarves in so they don't catch alight.
  - Don't fool with fireworks. It's not worth the risk. They are explosives and can be dangerous if not handled properly.
- 

### **Alcohol and fireworks – an explosive combination (Audiences – only teenage and older)**

Firework parties with family and friends have become increasingly popular in recent years.

Parties, of course, usually involve the consumption of alcohol. In fact, research shows that at 90% of firework parties in back gardens, alcohol is present.

The same research shows that 84% of respondents said that people setting off their fireworks had consumed at least 2-3 units of alcohol. One respondent said he was so drunk that he had to let someone else take over the lighting of the fireworks.



Not only does the consumption of alcohol increase the risk of injury in these circumstances, it also affects the ability of adults to properly supervise children during the display.

Here's some commonsense advice to add to the well-known Firework Code:

- Never drink alcohol if you are setting off fireworks or tending a bonfire.
- Nominate responsible persons who are not drinking alcohol to take charge of firework displays.
- If guests at your party are drinking alcohol, keep them well away from fireworks and the bonfire.
- Consider limiting the availability of alcohol until after all your fireworks have been set off.
- Don't carry fireworks in your pocket to street parties or celebrations.
- Have an enjoyable party, but remember, alcohol and fireworks don't mix.

---

### **Keep on the right side of the law**

The age limit for buying most fireworks is 18. All sparkler packets must carry the words "Warning: not to be given to children under five years of age." Since the end of 1997, it has been against the law to sell or supply bangers, aerial shells, mini-rockets and some types of bigger Roman Candles to the public. It is also illegal to sell air bombs, now known as shot tubes.

---

### **Illegal to supply to under 18s**

No one should buy fireworks other than responsible adults who are going to supervise the use of those fireworks in their own garden. It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be sold fireworks.

---

### **Illegal to split retail packs**

It is illegal to break open retail packs of fireworks and sell them individually. Some fireworks are intended to be sold individually, but these do not come in packs. The reason why packs must not be broken open is that many of the instructions for using the fireworks safely are printed on the packet and not on the individual firework.

---

### **Illegal to use in a public place**

You may not be aware that it is an offence punishable by fine to let fireworks off in a public place. So how do you define a public place? For simplicity regard it as anywhere other than in your own back garden. The street outside is a public place, as is the council park, the bus station, the school playground, the football stadium or the youth centre.

---

## **Illegal to sell from unlicensed/unregistered premises**

It is illegal to sell fireworks from premises not registered/licensed with the relevant local authority or Fire Service. Selling from white vans is illegal, as is selling at car boot sales.

---

## **British Standard (BS 7114)**

Fireworks are safer now than they have been in the past. If used properly and in accordance with instructions there is very little chance of anyone getting injured. In 1988 a British Standard known as BS 7114 was introduced. This is a safety standard which sets out specifications and test procedures for fireworks. For example, fireworks complying with BS 7114:

- are limited as to the explosive content
- have recommended safe distances for viewing them
- have strict times for how long the fuse will burn to enable people to move out of the way

Never buy or use fireworks which do not show on the labels that they comply with BS 7114.

---

## **Follow the clues to fireworks safety (Audience – children over 5 and young people)**

Fireworks are great fun to watch, but every year lots of young people get hurt in firework accidents. Make sure you're not one of them by following tips on firework safety.

- Never play with fireworks – they are explosives and can hurt you.
- Only adults should handle and light fireworks.
- When you are watching fireworks, stand well back.
- Never go near a firework that has been lit. Even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode.

### **If you are given sparklers:**

- Hold them one at a time
- Always wear gloves
- Hold them at arm's length
- When a sparkler goes out, DON'T TOUCH IT. It could still burn you, so put it hot end down in a bucket of water.

Remember, you have to be 18 years old before you can buy fireworks in the shops.



---

## **Firework Code**

1. Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114.
2. Don't drink alcohol if setting off fireworks.
3. Keep fireworks in a closed box.
4. Follow the instructions on each firework.
5. Light them at arm's length, using a taper.
6. Stand well back.
7. Never go near a firework that has been lit.
8. Even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode.
9. Never put fireworks in your pocket or throw them.
10. Always supervise children around fireworks.
11. Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.
12. Never give sparklers to a child under five.
13. Keep pets indoors.
14. Don't let off noisy fireworks after 11pm.

---

## **And remember...**

**Fireworks. Be safe not sorry. Always follow the Code.**

# Making partnerships work

---

## A GUIDE TO NETWORKING

Many of the most effective local firework safety campaigns around the country are as a result of partnerships between different local organisations.

You can also work with local residents groups to make an impact on specific problem areas. Your organisation is one of around 1500 that take part each year in the drive to ensure safe and responsible use of fireworks, and the numbers are increasing every year. If you have not already done so, set up a coordinated local group and use each other's experience to boost your local initiative around safe and responsible fireworks use.

If you have any successful partnerships in your local area, we would like to hear about them. Send us details of your local initiatives and campaigns through our website

---

## Making it work

As well as joining up with other organisations in your area, remember that talking through your ideas with colleagues in your own organisations can be helpful. If you have access to a Public Relations or Communications Officer for your organisation, talk them through your campaign – they will be able to help you get publicity in local papers and on regional radio and television.

---

## Remember, remember

Use the skills and expertise of the following organisations to get the most out of your activities:

- Trading Standards Departments – they can help get retailers behind your Firework Safety campaign.
- Fire Service – they can give advice on dealing with first aid and bonfires. They may be prepared to help by staging demonstrations of the dangers of misusing fireworks. If they do get involved make sure you tell the media – it makes a good picture story!
- Police Forces – will help you if there is a history of anti-social behaviour involving fireworks in your area. They may also be prepared to give talks in schools.
- Environmental Health Departments and Health Promotion Units – will also be keen to go into schools to spread the campaign message.

# Keep on the Right Side of the Law

---

The Fireworks Regulations 2004, made under the Fireworks Act 2003, form a comprehensive package of measures designed principally to tackle the anti-social and criminal use of fireworks via the regulation of supply and use. The regulations include:

- Making it an offence for under 18s to possess adult fireworks in public places and for anyone other than a firework professional is to possess Category 4 (professional display) fireworks;
- A requirement that suppliers selling fireworks all year round should be licensed – having the effect of restricting sales to within certain defined periods. The periods where selling without a licence is permitted are:

November 5th – (October 15th to November 10th)

New Year – (December 26th to December 31st)

Chinese New Year – (On the first day of the Chinese New Year and the three days immediately preceding it)

Diwali – (On the day of Diwali and the three days immediately preceding it)

- The creation of a curfew on firework use between 11pm and 7am (in line with the Noise Act 1996), with the exception of the following nights where the curfew will vary:

November 5th – until midnight

New Year's Eve – 1am on the following day

Chinese New Year – 1am on the following day

Diwali – 1am on the following day

- A requirement that suppliers of fireworks display a large notice/or, in the case of internet/mail order sales – display a notice in a prominent place) informing/reminding consumers of the law in relation to under age sale and possession;
- A requirement that importers supply information at the point of entry (the ports) to help ensure that their fireworks are destined for legitimate storage and distribution. This information will be passed on to the relevant authority responsible for storage licences to enable checks on deliveries;
- Licensing Authorities may also ask to see information relating to transactions of fireworks exceeding 50kg of net explosive content; and

- The imposition of a maximum decibel limit on Category 3 fireworks (in line with the new harmonized European Standard – BS EN 14035).
- 

## **Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2010**

### **Age of Purchase**

- Fireworks (which include sparklers) must not be supplied to persons under 18
- Caps, cracker snaps, indoor fireworks, novelty matches, party poppers, serpents and throwdowns must not be supplied to persons under 16

### **The following fireworks must not be supplied to the general public:**

- Aerial wheels
- Bangers, flash bangers or double bangers
- Jumping crackers
- Jumping ground spinners
- Spinners
- Mini rockets
- Shot tubes – previously known as air bombs
- Shot tubes – previously known as shell-in-mortar
- A battery containing bangers, flash bangers or double bangers
- A combination (other than a wheel) which includes one or more bangers, flash bangers or double bangers

### **Other measures**

- Packets of sparklers must carry the warning – “Warning: not to be given to children under 5 years of age”
- Retail boxes of fireworks must not be split
- All fireworks intended for use by the general public must comply with British Standard BS 7114: Part 2: 1988
- All fireworks not suitable (as determined by the Regulations) for use by the general public must bear the warning – “This device must not be sold to, or used by, a member of the general public”
- Under recent changes to the Regulations, it is no longer a legal defence to claim that the person to whom you supplied/sold fireworks “appeared” to be 18 or over.
- It is therefore recommended that retailers be more pro-active in determining the actual age of the consumer – if there is any doubt ask for proof of age.

**Penalties**

- Failure to comply with these requirements can result in prosecution and a fine of up to £5000 and/or a prison sentence of up to six months.
- 

**The Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations 2005****Storage of fireworks**

- It is an offence to keep more than 5kg net of fireworks (except those for private use) on premises which have not been registered or licensed for that purpose
- 

**The Explosives Act 1875 (as amended) – Section 80****Throwing fireworks**

- It is an offence to throw or discharge a firework in a street or public place

**Penalties**

- Failure to comply with these requirements can result in prosecution and a fine of up to £5000.