

# Fireworks

## Community Safety Services

Fireworks are widely used to mark public and private celebrations, as well as traditional events. While adding excitement to occasions, fireworks can also frighten and disturb people and animals, cause annoyance, damage and impact on air quality.

This information sheet looks at the environmental impacts of fireworks and how they can be managed.

### Why worry about fireworks?



### Noise

Fireworks can be very frightening for people and animals, especially children and the elderly who can be intimidated and scared by firework noise. Disturbing animals and domestic pets can be dangerous as panicked pets can become vicious and destructive, and startled animals have been injured and killed and caused accidents when bolting across a road.

### Air Pollution

The bright colours and effects in fireworks are produced by a cocktail of chemicals. Fireworks emit light, heat and sound energy along with carbon dioxide and other gases and residues. The exact emissions will depend on the firework, but as gunpowder is a main component, sulphur compounds are the main pollutant emitted. On and around Bonfire Night (5<sup>th</sup> November), there is often a noticeable increase in pollution from particulates and dioxins. Approximately 14% of UK dioxin emissions are produced around Bonfire Night – most of this coming from bonfires rather than fireworks. Current research indicates that deposits of pollutants from fireworks do not pose a risk to soil or water.

### Storage of fireworks

Under the *Control of Explosives Regulations 1991*, it is an offence to keep fireworks (except those for private use) on premises that have not been registered for this purpose. Individuals can store fireworks for private use for up to 14 days, provided they are kept in a safe place such as a sealed box or tin.

### What laws cover nuisance and danger caused by fireworks?

The most recent legislation to deal with fireworks, is The Fireworks Regulations 2004 which were brought in to deal with the antisocial aspects of firework use and to prohibit fireworks being set off between the hours of 23:00 hrs and 07:00 hrs, except on certain dates (see over leaf).

Responsibility for enforcement of the restrictions in these regulations rests with the Police in the area of concern

These regulations also control the sale of fireworks and prohibit retailers selling fireworks that are louder than 120 decibels.



Local Authorities do have powers to deal with noise nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Noise Act 1996. However, in relation to fireworks, due to the short duration of the noise from fireworks in any individual property and the fact that this is not recurrent over a number of days as well as the difficulty in locating the source makes it virtually impossible for the local authority to take any action under this legislation.

### When can I use fireworks?

As advised earlier, The *Fireworks Regulations 2004* prohibits anyone under 18 from possessing fireworks, and anyone except professionals from possessing display fireworks. These regulations also prohibit the use of fireworks at night between 11pm - 7am in England and Wales, with extensions for the following festivals:

- **Chinese New Year until 1am**
- **Diwali until 1am on the night**
- **New Year's Eve until 1am on the night**
- **Bonfire Night until midnight on 5 November.**

**These regulations are enforced by the Police and in Harrow they can be contacted on 020 8423 1212.** There is a penalty of up to £5000 or 6 months in prison for breach of the curfew.



### Fixed Penalty Notices

Throwing or setting off fireworks in the street is an offence under the *Explosives Act 1875*. This is enforced by the police, and a fixed penalty notice of £80 applies. Police can enforce a fixed penalty notice of £80 to anyone under 18 possessing a firework in a public place and for breach of the 11pm curfew on letting off fireworks.

### Animals

It is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to animals under the *Protection of Animals Act 1911*. A penalty of up to £5000 and/or 6 months in prison is enforceable by police, trading standards or the RSPCA.

### Avoid firework frights

Throughout the UK there are hundreds of organised fireworks displays during times of celebration and it is advisable to visit such events rather than have fireworks displays at home.

However you can enjoy Fireworks at home and in safety and without causing annoyance to your neighbours and their pets or livestock, or to wildlife. If you have your own firework display follow the Firework Code and also follow these simple guidelines to reduce the risk of nuisance:

- Give neighbours a few days notice of your display – particularly important if they are elderly, have children or pets.
- Use appropriate fireworks – when buying fireworks, try to avoid really noisy ones. Your supplier should be able to tell you what they are selling.
- Make sure pets and other animals are safely away from fireworks.

- Consider timing. If you are using fireworks for a celebration, a Friday or Saturday is preferable, and make sure they are over by 11pm.
- Avoid letting off fireworks in unsuitable weather – if it is still and misty or air quality is poor pollution could be a problem. Strong winds can be hazardous. Check air quality on 0800 556677 or <http://www.airquality.co.uk>
- Let off your fireworks in an open garden area – noise bounces off buildings and smoke and pollution can build up in enclosed spaces.
- If a neighbour complains that you are disturbing them, their pets or livestock, be considerate.
- After your display, clear up firework fallout and dispose of it safely.

### The Law on Supplying Fireworks

Under the *Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1997* all fireworks for use by the public must meet British Standard BS 7114. Under these regulations, the sale of fireworks to anyone under 18 is banned, and of caps, cracker snaps and party poppers to anyone under 16, the supply of bangers, mini rockets, fireworks that fly erratically (squibs, helicopters, etc) aerial shells and maroons and mortars and some large powerful display fireworks are banned from supply to the public. These regulations are enforced by local authority consumer protection/trading standards officers who can be contacted on 020 8937 5555. Suppliers/shopkeepers in breach face a fine of up to £5000/6 month's prison.



### Safety

Fireworks are explosives and must be used with caution. In 2005 nearly 1000 people received hospital treatment for firework injuries, many of them were children, and some are now scarred for life. For information on firework safety, contact the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR), who co-ordinate national firework safety campaigns at [www.berr.gov.uk/fireworks](http://www.berr.gov.uk/fireworks)

Anyone planning a large display should buy and follow the guidance from the HSE "Giving your own firework display" HSG124 which can be obtained from [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk) for £9.95.

Professional display operators should also follow the guidance in "Working together on firework displays" HSG123 at £9.50.

### 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. Even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode.
8. Never put fireworks in your pocket or throw them.
9. Always supervise children around fireworks.
10. Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.
11. Never give sparklers to a child under five.
12. Keep pets indoors.
13. Don't let off noisy fireworks after 11pm.

### And remember...

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

## Further contacts and information

### **Noise Abatement Society**

<http://www.noiseabatementociety.com>

[nas@noiseabatementociety.com](mailto:nas@noiseabatementociety.com)

Noise Helpline: 01273 878782

*Membership organisation for noise sufferers*

### **Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR)**

[www.berr.gov.uk/fireworks](http://www.berr.gov.uk/fireworks)

*Co-ordinate national firework safety campaigns*

### **RSPCA**

<http://www.rspca.org.uk> / Tel: 0870 55599

*Information and advice on fireworks and animals*

### **The Blue Cross**

<http://www.bluecross.org.uk>

Tel: 01933 822651

*Advisory leaflet 'fireworks and pets'*

### **Fireservice**

<http://www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/bonfires.php>


### **Confederation of British Industry**

<http://www.fireworksafety.co.uk>

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This fact sheet can be made available in Braille, large print, Makaton and on audio tape. It can also be translated or interpreted into languages other than English on request. Signers can be arranged for customers with hearing difficulties. An induction loop system is available in our reception. A portable induction loop system is available on request.

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