

Fireworks advice

A guide to organising safe firework displays



Fireworks advice

Please give this information to people who will be attending your firework display. To be useful, it should be issued before the event!

STOP!!!!

**Before you leave....
is your home safe?**

DO:

- Lock all your doors and windows when you go out. Pay particular attention to the back of your premises.
- Keep your shed and/or garage locked. If your garage has a communicating door to the interior of the house, make sure it is securely locked.
- Close curtains and leave a light on in a room (not the hall) when you go out for the evening.
- Light up any dark areas around your home.

DON'T:

- Leave door keys in hiding places, such as under a door mat or in a flower pot. Thieves know all the hiding places.
- Leave a window open a few inches for the cat to get in or out. Burglars find this very useful too.
- Leave ladders around. If you must leave them outside, make sure they are padlocked to something secure.

Introduction

This guide is for organiser of firework displays to help make them safe. It covers most types of displays, including those where the fireworks are to be set off by the organisers. These events are often put on by organisations like school parent/teacher associations and sports clubs, and by public houses for their customers. The guide also covers the larger displays organised by voluntary organisations like the round Table where professional display operators are used.

If you are having a firework party for family, friends and neighbours, generally you should only need to follow the instructions supplied with the fireworks. However, you may find the safety advice in this guide useful.

Please bear in mind that this is only a guide, and not a definitive document. The leaflets/booklets/video mentioned in the 'recommended viewing & reading section provide additional information and advice.

Generally

Under the Health and Safety At Work etc. Act 1974, those putting on an event are responsible for both the organisation and consequences of the event. To comply with the law you must manage risks in order to protect the public and your members and/or employees. Following the steps outlined in this document will enable you to comply, and at the same time, enjoy a safe event.

Fireworks advice

Planning the display

Organisation

Start organising the display as early as possible.

Form a Committee (no matter how informal) with responsibility for the operation of the display, with one person in overall charge. One person should be solely responsible for safety matters. They should not be engaged in any other duties or activities which would prevent them carrying out this responsibility.

All with a specific responsibility before and during the display should be named and all hazards identified; precautions specified and everyone appropriately trained.

Everyone assisting during the course of the display should be properly instructed in their responsibilities and what action to take in the event of an emergency.

It is suggested that this is set down in writing.

Who to contact

It is advisable to contact the following people well before the display. Where necessary keep in touch with them as your plans proceed:

Police

Contact the Police Station local to the site. Tell them of the location of the display and its layout, including entrances and exits. They can advise you and may be able to assist with crowd control; public order; emergency access; and local traffic management and parking.

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Fire brigade

Contact the Fire Station local to the site at least 28 days before the event. They will be able to give advice on how the emergency services will be called; marshalling of spectators and traffic in emergency conditions; arrangements of spectators enclosures; local access for emergency vehicles; nearby buildings and feature which could be affected by a fire and provision of on-site fire-fighting arrangements.

First aid

Contact St John Ambulance, British Red Cross or other voluntary First Aid society to arrange attendance at larger displays at an early stage in your planning.

Local authority

At an early stage of your planning contact the Council Departments listed on the rear cover for advice:

- About your arrangements for storing fireworks before the display and the possible need for registration.
- About your duties under health and safety legislation.
- If food is going to be sold at the display.
- On the possible need for a premises licence or temporary event notice (TENS), i.e. where the display accompanies a music concert, but not normally where music is incidental to a display.

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Public liability insurance

You should be aware that the organisers could be held legally liable for the costs or damages for any injuries, etc, which may occur during the event. It is possible to insure this risk via a public liability insurance policy and it is recommended that this insurance be arranged with a minimum limit of indemnity of £2m, although in many instances a greater level of cover may be needed.

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Remember, without cover, the claim would be made against all the organisers and their private finances.

Council schools, youth clubs and other Council establishments proposing to hold a display should contact their Council's Insurance Section to ensure that they are adequately insured. PTAs and other voluntary groups will require their own separate insurance cover.

Contractors' insurance

Where organisers are using specialist fire display contractors, they should check that the contractor has their own public liability insurance and that the contractor complies with any policy terms and conditions.

Insurance claims

In the event of any injury or damage to property, ensure that full details of the incident are written down, and that the matter is reported to your insurers without delay. Never admit liability as it may invalidate your cover.

Neighbours

Contact neighbouring landowners/users so they can keep animals indoors where necessary, and, in the interests of good public relations, inform any nearby hospitals, homes for the elderly, etc.

Aerodromes

If the display is near an aerodrome/flight path, or you are unsure whether it is,

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you should contact the Airspace Utilisation Section, of the Civil Aviation Authority telephone: 020 7453 6599. They will advise you whether restrictions may be required on the height of any aerial fireworks, lasers or searchlights that form part of the display.

Site layout

Set out the site as indicated on the 'display layout diagram' overleaf.

The site should be as large as possible for public safety, bearing in mind the types of fireworks to be used (which will affect the size of the safety and fall-out areas) and the expected number of spectators.

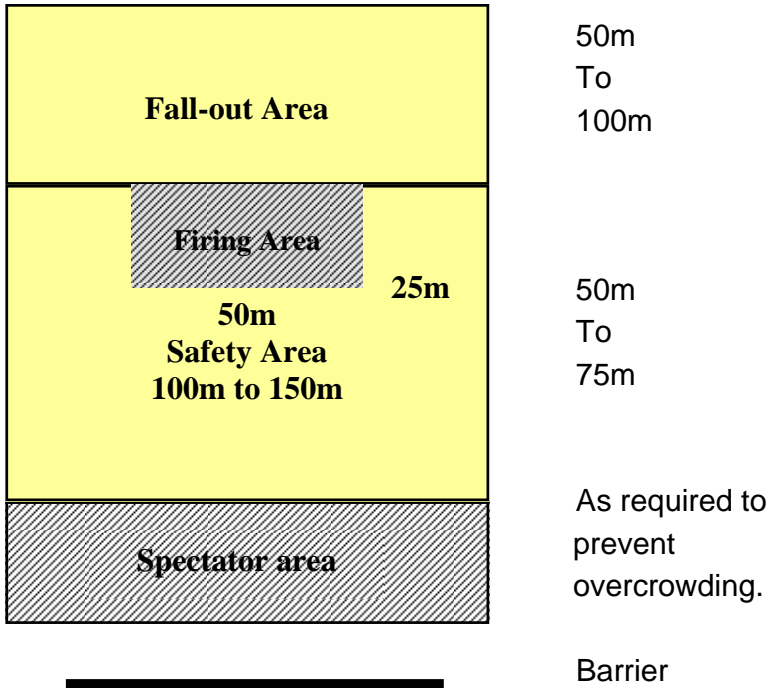
The lesser dimensions for the safety, firing and fall-out areas are the minimum required for smaller displays using Category 1, 2 and 3 fireworks, whereas the larger dimensions are applicable to larger displays where the use of Category 4 fireworks will require deeper safety and fall-out areas.

Under the classification, Category 1 are Indoor Fireworks; Category 2 - Garden Fireworks (eg, selection boxes on sale for 5 November); Category 3 - Display Fireworks (the largest on retail sale) and Category 4 Fireworks are both **not** available to the general public and must be set off by trained operators. **It should be noted that some types of fireworks may require greater distances.**

Fireworks should only ever be purchased from a reputable supplier.

Fireworks advice

Display layout diagram



Ensure that the site is free of dry, cut grass and other easily combustible material.

Check the site in daylight for obstructions, ie, trees, overhead power lines, adjoining buildings, entrances/exits and parked vehicles. Locate firing and fallout areas clear of any obstructions.

Site facilities – accommodation

Allow an area of at least 0.5 square metres per person.

Overcrowding should not be allowed.

Consider providing an area and facilities for spectators with disabilities.

Fireworks advice

Spectators' fireworks

Do not admit spectators to the display with their own fireworks. Publish notice of this in advance and at all entrances on the night. Do not sell fireworks at the site.

Exits

Provide at least two spectator exits from the site; large enough, spaced well apart, clearly marked, kept free from obstructions and well lit. If in doubt contact the fire service.

Safety barriers

Provide sufficient physical barriers to prevent spectators entering the safety, display, fall-out and bonfire areas.

Fire-fighting

Provide equipment for putting out small fires (eg, fire extinguishers, buckets of water/sand, fire blankets) throughout the site. Ensure that an adequate number of stewards know how to use this equipment. Tell them not to attempt to fight major fires.

First aid

Arrange for a voluntary first aid society to provide a suitably equipped and well lit First Aid Post, staffed by qualified first-aiders, at larger displays. At smaller displays where voluntary first aid societies are not able to be in attendance, ensure that a qualified first aider is present. This person should be readily identifiable. A well lit facility suitable for first aid treatment should be made available, provided with a plentiful supply of water for the treatment of burns, eyewash and eyebaths and a selection of sterile dressings. You should be aware that any burn deeper than the surface of the skin or larger than 25mm in diameter must be referred to a doctor or hospital.

Fireworks advice

Clearly signpost the First Aid Post and provide clear and easy access for spectators and an ambulance at all times. Where an ambulance is required provide a parking area adjacent to the First Aid Post and maintain a clear exit from the site.

Ensure that all persons assisting at the display are aware of the location of the First Aid Post, or where appropriate the identity of the first aider. Locate the nearest telephone box or provide access to a telephone.

Emergency access

Keep the agreed emergency service routes clear of obstruction and readily accessible at all times.

Public address

Provide a small public address system or portable loudhailer so that announcements and instructions can be heard by all spectators.

Refreshments

Refreshment facilities should be located away from the spectator area and pedestrian and vehicle access/egress points.

Fireworks and alcohol do not mix.

Litter

Provide suitable litter bins throughout the spectator area.

Car parking

Site any car parking well away from the display and fall-out areas and upwind of them. Clearly signpost the parking area. Separate vehicle and pedestrian entrances. Do not allow car parking anywhere else.

Fireworks advice

Crowd safety

Provide an adequate number of stewards who are responsible solely for crowd safety. There should be no fewer than two stewards for up to 500 people plus one for each additional 250 people expected to attend. Make the stewards easily identifiable, ie, wearing fluorescent jackets and provided with torches. Have additional torches available for other staff and a supply of spare batteries.

Make every effort to start the display on time as crowd control becomes difficult the longer people are kept waiting. If a delay is unavoidable, tell the spectators at an early stage, and keep them updated.

Emergency planning

When planning the event, consider what could go wrong on the day and draw up a plan to deal with each emergency or contingency, to include “What action will be taken?” and “Who will take that action?”

The following paragraphs highlight some of the problems that may arise and actions that could be taken. The list is not exhaustive, but should help you plan ahead for emergencies.

Stopping the display early/cancelling due to adverse weather conditions

You will have based the site layout on the prevailing wind conditions. If the wind direction is different on the day of the display, consideration may have to be given to altering the layout to ensure people’s safety. If this is not possible or inadvisable as it may interfere with exits, you may have to consider the actions for high winds described in the following paragraph.

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In high winds it may be necessary to modify the display (ie. Eliminate aerial fireworks) or, in extreme conditions, cancel it or finish early. The firers should be involved in these decisions and if they wish to stop or cancel the display, they should not be overruled by the organisers.

Accident to someone from a firework

Have a procedure to ensure that first aiders have clear access to an injured person as soon as possible. In the event of serious injury have an ambulance called immediately by a designated organiser and suspend firing of the display.

Spectators in safety, firing or fall-out areas

If spectators break through the barrier into the safety, firing or fall-out areas ensure that firing of fireworks stops as soon as practicable.

Bonfire out of control/fire started by firework debris/etc

If you cannot deal with the fire using first-aid firefighting equipment, call the fire brigade without delay and suspend firing of the display until the fire is extinguished or the fire brigade advises it is under control. If fire threatens the fireworks, move them only if it is safe to do so. If spectators have to be moved away from the fire ensure that access for fire appliances is maintained at all times.

Disorderly behaviour by spectators

If trouble seems to be developing consider calling the police rather than dealing with the matter yourselves.

Communications

Two-way radio should be provided between the display operator/firers and other people with key responsibility for emergency

Fireworks advice

The bonfire

Make one person responsible for the bonfire.

SITING

Locate the bonfire at least 15m away from other areas, buildings, roads, railways and public rights of way.

Downwind of spectators, to prevent their view being obscured by smoke and burning ashes being blown into the firework team.

A safe distance from flammable or otherwise dangerous materials [eg, petrol, liquified petroleum gas] and overhead power lines.

CONSTRUCTION

Use dry material with heavy bulk items forming the core of the fire, arranged so that the bonfire collapses inwards.

Do **not** burn dangerous rubbish like foam-filled furniture, old tyres, aerosols, bottles, tins of paint, etc.

BEFORE LIGHTING

Check, during daylight, that construction is stable and remove any unsuitable materials that may have been added. Look for fireworks, aerosols, highly inflammable materials or containers containing such materials.

Check then and **immediately** before lighting that there are no children or animals inside.

LIGHTING

► One person should be responsible for lighting the bonfire.

NEVER use petrol, paraffin or other flammable liquids to start the fire.

Use paper and solid firelighters at two or three places to ensure an even burn.

Fireworks advice

The person looking after the bonfire should not wear lightweight clothing which could ignite relatively easily. They are recommended to wear a substantial outer garment of wool or other material of low flammability and stout boots or shoes. They need to know what to do in the event of a burn injury or a persons clothing catching fire. They need to have a fire blanket ready in the bonfire area.

It is preferable not to light the bonfire before setting off the fireworks as stray sparks may accidentally set them off.

The fireworks display

FIREWORKS

Bulk purchases of fireworks for larger displays should be made from reputable manufacturers and should comply to BS 7114.

Fireworks for smaller displays may be purchased in boxed sets from local shops which are registered for their sale by the Council.

Do **not** use damaged fireworks or fireworks left over from previous years.

Sparklers are **not** to be given to children under 5 years of age.

Storage

Fireworks should not be stored within a domestic house, but in an outbuilding which offers security and protection from damp.

Store fireworks in the transportation containers in which they are supplied, and store loose fireworks in closed metal containers, ie, dustbins.

Fireworks advice

Handling/setting up (for small home displays only)

Unpack carefully in a dry place away from open fires and flammable materials.

Do not smoke when handling fireworks.

Study the manufacturers instructions about the fireworks before the event, preferably in daylight. This will give time to prepare any firework supports and train firers. Seek clarification from the manufacturers if the instructions are not clear.

Read and observe the instructions on each firework using a torch not a naked flame.

Set fireworks in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. Angle them away from spectators and place stakes used to support rockets, roman candles or similar fireworks on the spectators side of the firework. This will ensure that in the event of the stake collapsing or the firework becoming detached the firework will fall away from the spectators.

Only set up fireworks in the firing area.

Lighting

Allow only firers into the firing area and restrict their numbers to the minimum necessary—two will normally be sufficient. If there is no radio link, appoint one person to relay messages between the firers and the person in overall charge of the display.

Firers should wear suitable protective clothing. This could consist of stout footwear and outer clothing of wool or other fire resistant material and a protective hat, eye and ear protection and gloves. Lightweight flammable clothing ie, shell suits should not be avoided. Each firer should carry a torch and a whistle to attract attention in case of difficulty.

For lighting display fireworks a device called a portfire is usually provided by the manufacturer and it is essential this is used . Portfires should not be carried in packets but should be kept in a closed container when not in use.

Fireworks advice

For lighting garden fireworks use the fuse wick supplied in boxed sets.

Never use matches.

FAULTY FIREWORKS

Leave a firework which fails to go off until the end of the display or for at least 30 minutes, whichever is the longer, before placing it in a bucket of water, preferably overnight. Seek the manufacturer's advice on safe disposal.

Do **not** attempt to relight faulty fireworks.

Do **not** put them on the bonfire for disposal.

After the display

Keep spectators out of the safety, firing and fall-out areas until the firers have checked and made the site safe, locating and dealing with any fireworks that have misfired.

Never put fireworks, including fully spent ones, on the bonfire or dispose of them by burying. Place fully spent fireworks (but **not** misfired or partly spent) in refuse receptacles. Soak misfired or partly spent fireworks in a container of water in an area where they cannot be tampered with and contact the manufacturer or supplier for advice on safe disposal. Keep spectators out of the bonfire area until the fire has been properly extinguished. Cool it down before leaving the site. Return to the site at first light to check that the area is clear of partly spent fireworks and other hazardous remains.

Fireworks advice

Recommended viewing and reading

The following videos and publications provide additional information on organising and setting up a bonfire/firework display:-

‘Celebrate Bonfire Night in Safety’ is a short VHS video film produced jointly by the DTI and a firework manufacturer.

‘Safer Displays - A guide to Firework Safety’, **‘Selling Fireworks - Some things you should know’** and **‘Firework Displays - A Guide for Organisers’** are leaflets produced by the DTI.

‘Giving your own Firework Display’ and **‘Working together on Firework Displays’** are booklets published by the Health and Safety Executive.

Copies of the video and leaflets and advice on the health and safety booklets may be available from the Council Departments listed on the rear cover.



Fireworks advice

The fireworks code

Keep fireworks in a closed box/

Take them out one at a time and put the top back at once!
When the box is open, keep it well away from fire and cigarettes.

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS ON EACH FIREWORK CAREFULLY

Read them by torchlight **never a naked flame!**

Light tip of firework fuse at arm's length

Preferably with a safety firework lighter or fuse wick.

Stand well back

Never return to a firework once lit

It may go off in your face!

Never throw fireworks!

Never put fireworks in your pocket

Keep pets indoors

Never fool with fireworks

A BONFIRE CHECKLIST:

Don't put bonfires near buildings

Don't build dens inside a bonfire

Don't use petrol to light a bonfire

Don't put aerosols or bottles on bonfires

Don't throw firework onto a bonfire

Fireworks advice

REMEMBER - IF YOUR CLOTHING CATCHES FIRE, STOP - don't run, DROP to the floor/ground and ROLL OVER to put the flames out.

Contact Telephone Numbers

Suffolk Constabulary

Ipswich Area

01473 613500

Sudbury Area

01284 774100

Suffolk County Council

Fire Service Headquarters

Colchester Road

Ipswich IP4 4SS

01473 588888

St John Ambulance

Ipswich

01473 241500

Red Cross

Bury St Edmunds HQ

01284 767215

Trading Standards

Suffolk County Council

Consumer Advice

01473 583000

Highways Department

Suffolk County Council

0845 606 6067

Fireworks advice

Natural and Built Environment
Babergh District Council
Corks Lane, Hadleigh
Ipswich IP7 6SJ
Minicom: 01473 825878 
Telephone: 01473 825764

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on audio tape, in Braille, large print or
another language upon request by
telephoning 01473 826622

