



FIREWORKS

INFORMATION & ADVICE

This document can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in other languages upon request

The Facts

Fireworks were invented nearly 2000 years ago in China. These days they are used all around the world as part of formal and family celebrations.

A simple sparkler reaches a temperature of up to 2000°C. That's over 15 times the boiling point of water and yet we give them to small children. A rocket can reach 150 miles an hour and is the most common cause of firework injuries.

The number of injuries caused by fireworks each year is relatively low. In 2002, the overall number of firework injuries fell by 25% with 1,017 injuries recorded. Significantly they fell by even more among the group we targeted in last year's fireworks safety campaign – teenagers – by nearly 32%.

The bonfire and the positioning

- 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 (e.g., petrol, liquefied petroleum gas) and overhead power lines.

Construction of the bonfire

- 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.
- Avoid light materials such as corrugated cardboard which is liable to blow about when burning and/or burnt.
- Tie the guy securely to the top of the bonfire.
- Cover the bonfire to keep materials dry.

Before lighting your bonfire

- During daylight, check that the 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 your bonfire

- 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 from two or three places to ensure an even burn.
- 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 person's 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.

Fireworks

Store your fireworks safely.

- In a closed box, somewhere cool and dry, out of reach of children and animals, until the time they're needed. Locked away is best. Don't keep the box under the stairs or in a passageway.

Pets hate bangs and flashes.

- Pets get very frightened on fireworks night, so keep all your pets indoors and close all the curtains to make things calmer. Remember it's not just your own fireworks that cause distress, so you may have to have your pets indoors on several nights when other displays are taking place.

Think ahead and be prepared.

- Before you start make sure you'll be giving yourself enough room in a safe place to get to and from your box of fireworks while the display's going on. Have a full bucket of water handy for any emergency, and for putting used sparklers into. If you have the chance to get together with some other families, try to go to the home with the biggest garden and safest surroundings.

Things you definitely don't do!

- Never try to re-ignite malfunctioning fireworks.
- Never give ANY firework item to small children.
- Never throw fireworks at another person.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Never shoot fireworks from metal or glass containers.
- Never experiment, modify, or attempt to make your own fireworks.

Watch what you wear

Loose clothing can very easily catch fire, and should not be worn near any fire or fireworks. Long dangly scarves can be risky too. If anyone's clothing does catch fire, follow the rule:

- **STOP DON'T RUN**
- **DROP TO THE GROUND**
- **ROLL TO PUT OUT THE FLAMES**

One at a time please

- You (or another adult that you choose) must be the only person letting off fireworks.
- Don't allow anyone else - especially children - to do so while your display's going on.
- Let the fireworks off one at a time (not lots at once) and don't rush. Light the tip of each firework at arm's length, using a fireworks lighter or fuse wick. Stand well back immediately.
- If one doesn't go off, don't go back to it - it could still be live, and could go off unexpectedly in your

face. Right at the end of your fireworks night, douse the 'dud' with lots of water, keep it soaking in a bucket of water and ask your Fire Department for advice as soon as possible.

- Never throw fireworks onto a bonfire

Different fireworks mean different hazards

- Read the instructions on each one carefully (by flashlight, never a open flame) and follow them properly. Rockets, for instance, should be launched from a rocket launcher, not from a bottle.
- Sparklers need careful handling - light them one at a time at arm's length; don't give one to any child under 5; make sure that anyone holding a sparkler wears gloves; and put each spent one into a bucket of water as soon as it's gone out.
- Putting fireworks in your pocket is stupid and dangerous.
- Throwing fireworks at people is stupid and dangerous and illegal; it's a criminal offence to do so.

Fireworks and booze don't mix

- Drinking alcohol presents an added danger when there are fireworks and bonfires around. So don't drink during your fireworks display.

Watch that child!

Keep children well away from fireworks, and never let a child handle or light one. Even sparklers can be dangerous if unsupervised! Do not give sparklers to a child under five. Make sure that children are aware of the dangers.

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. It means that fireworks will be safer, less noisy and can only be let off at certain times. It also means that those misusing them to either damage property or injure will be able to be dealt with by the relevant authorities. 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.

Penalties

It is an offence under section 80 of the Explosives Act 1875 to throw or set off fireworks in any highway, street, thoroughfare or public place. The power to enforce this section of the Act rests with the police. Anyone found guilty is liable to pay a fine of up to £5,000. Penalty notices for disorder (on-the-spot fines) can also be issued for this offence, attracting the upper tier fine of £80.

In Regulations made under the Fireworks Act 2003, it is also an offence for the under 18s to possess fireworks in a public place and for anyone to let fireworks off during night hours (11pm to 7am). As from 11 October 2004, police also have the power to issue penalty notices for disorder for these offences. Again, the offence attracts the upper tier fine of £80.

Under section 1 of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 it is an offence to cause any unnecessary suffering to any domestic or captive animals. The penalty on conviction is a fine of up to £5,000 or up to six months imprisonment, or both. Enforcement of this section of the Act rests with Trading Standards, the Police or the RSPCA as appropriate.

So...Points to remember!

- * **You can't set off fireworks between 11pm and 7am except for on 5 November when you can set them off until midnight and New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year and Diwali when they can be set off until 1am.**
- * **You must be over 18 to buy fireworks, except for caps, cracker snaps, novelty matches, party poppers, serpents and throwdowns where the legal age of purchase is 16.**
- * **It is an offence to throw or set off fireworks in a street or public place and it is also illegal for anyone under 18 to possess fireworks in public**

Further information

Further information on fireworks can be found from the following organisations

The Department of Trade & Industry (DTI)



W www.dti.gov.uk

T 02072 155000

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE)



W www.hse.gov.uk

T 0845 345 0055

Royal Society For The Prevention Of Accident (ROSPA)



W www.rospa.com

T 012124 82000



HOW TO CONTACT THE COUNCIL

FOR ALL ENQUIRIES

Telephone

01643 703704

Telephone hours

8.30 am - 5.00 pm Monday to Friday
(Your call may be recorded for monitoring and training purposes)

Emergency out of hours

Careline 0800 0831404 (5.00 pm - 8.30 am)

Email

customerservices@westsomerset.gov.uk

Website

www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk

Minehead Customer Centre

1-3 Summerland Road, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5BP
Monday - Friday 9.00 am - 5.00 pm

Williton Office

West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, Taunton,
Somerset TA4 4QA
Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5pm; Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

Council Information Points

MINEHEAD The Town Hall, The Parade TA24 5NB
Tel (01643) 707213 Open Mon-Fri 9am-4pm
DULVERTON Police Station, 4 Exmoor Gardens TA22 9HL
Tel (01398) 324117 Open Mon-Fri 10am-1pm
PORLOCK The Old School Centre, West End TA24 8QD
Tel (01643) 863211 Open Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri 10.15am-1pm

***** HELP STOP FRAUD *****

If you know somebody who you think is claiming benefit incorrectly, help us to stop them by calling the Benefits Fraud Hotline **01984 635236**