

Firework safety. Staying injury-free when celebrating

Fireworks are an indispensable part of celebrations such as Bonfire Night and New Year's Eve. When your club or organisation puts on a special event with fireworks, take precautions to reduce the risks and keep your employees, volunteers and spectators injury-free.

Know the risks

Injuries and accidents mainly occur because many people don't realise just how dangerous fireworks can be. There is no reason why you should not light a display yourselves provided it only contains fireworks in categories 1, 2 and 3; but remember, category 4 fireworks may only be used by professional firework display operators. In untrained hands they can be lethal.

All fireworks pose potential risks of burns, blindness and other injuries. Educate any employees/volunteers by providing them with recommendations for using fireworks safely.

Be sure that your club or organisation is in compliance with all applicable regulations, including the Firework (Safety) Regulations 1997 and the subsequent amendments. The laws regulate who can purchase and use fireworks, when they can be purchased, when they may be used and what the maximum noise levels may be. Under these regulations, the industry focus is not only on product safety but also on the reduction of accidents and injuries.

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Be prepared

Make sure the site is suitable for your display.



Is there space for the fireworks to land well away from spectators? Remember to check in daylight for overhead power lines and other obstructions.

Check the weather.



Check reports both before and on the day of the event. What is the direction of the prevailing wind? What would happen if it changed?

Contact your local authorities and emergency services.



This will keep them informed of your plans, and give them plenty of advance notice.

Arrange for the proper delivery, storage and use of your fireworks.



Make sure you obtain the fireworks from a reputable supplier. Ensure that your employees/volunteers are properly trained on all tasks. The morning after, carefully check and clear the site. Dispose of fireworks safely.

Plan for proper crowd control.



Post all appropriate signs, keep spectators a safe distance from the firing area and locate car parking well away from the display area. Arrange for plenty of stewards to be responsible for keeping spectators safe. Mark exit routes clearly and ensure they are well lit. Ensure emergency vehicles can get access to the site.

Plan for what to do if things go wrong.



Ensure you have enough fire extinguishers and buckets of sand or water ready in the event that something lights on fire. Designate someone to be responsible for contacting emergency services. If the display is to be provided by a professional firework display operator make sure that you are clear on who does what, especially in the event of an emergency.

Protection

Though it's not required by health and safety law, we strongly advise that you are properly insured for your event, especially for injuries that may occur as a result of the fireworks.

Regardless of whether you hire a professional firework display operator or release the fireworks yourself, you should consider public liability insurance, which offers protection in the event of injury or damage to a spectator or third party property.

If you frequently host fireworks displays, consider purchasing a year-round policy. Keep in mind that most policies will only cover events that comply with firework display regulations. Other covers to consider are event cancellation insurance, weather insurance and special event insurance.

Not all liability policies include cover for firework displays or bonfires so it's important to check with your insurer or broker. It is important to make your insurer aware of any displays taking place so they can assess the risk in terms of size and exposure. Some displays nowadays have fairground rides, stages with live music, etc.

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Require further advice?

There are obvious risks involved when organising an event of this nature, as it presents many demands and challenges. You not only have to consider the safety of the spectators but also that of your display team and the equipment being used.

If you are thinking of holding a firework display event, you will find some useful guidance and information on the HSE website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/explosives/fireworks/index.htm>.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact us..

Call **0345 872 5060** email **faw@bluefinsport.co.uk** or visit **bluefinsport.co.uk/faw/kick-the-risk**



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