

Organising firework displays

Explosives: update

The UK has left the EU, and some rules and procedures have changed from 1 January 2021

Firework displays should be enjoyable and spectacular occasions – but they obviously need some responsible planning. The good news is that there is straightforward guidance to help you.

If you are organising a major public event, you will clearly need a robust and detailed approach to planning as well as professional involvement. If you are holding a local firework display, such as those organised by many sports clubs, schools or parish councils, you still need to plan responsibly, but the same level of detail is not necessary or expected. Below are some tips and guidance to help you.

Before the event:

- Think about who will operate the display. 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.
- Consider whether the site is suitable and large enough for your display, including a bonfire if you are having one. Is there space for the fireworks to land well away from spectators? Remember to check in daylight for overhead power lines and other obstructions. What is the direction of the prevailing wind? What would happen if it changed?
- Think about what you would do if things go wrong. Make sure there is someone who will be responsible for calling the emergency services
- Make sure you obtain the fireworks from a reputable supplier.
- 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
- Ensure you have a suitable place to store the fireworks. Your firework supplier or local authority should be able to advise
- If you plan on selling alcohol the bar should be well away from the display site

On the day of the event:

- Recheck the site, weather conditions and wind direction
- Don't let anyone into the zone where the fireworks will fall – or let anyone other than the display operator or firing team into the firing zone or the safety zone around it
- Discourage spectators from bringing drink onto the site
- Don't let spectators bring their own fireworks onto the site
- If you will also have a bonfire at the display then you should:
 - Check the structure is sound and does not have small children or animals inside it before lighting it
 - Not use petrol or paraffin to light the fire
 - Have only one person responsible for lighting the fire. That person, and any helpers, should wear suitable clothing eg a substantial outer garment made of wool or other low-flammable material.
 - Make sure that the person lighting the fire and any helpers know what to do in the event of a burn injury or clothing catching fire
- Never attempt to relight fireworks. Keep well clear of fireworks that have failed to go off

The morning after:

- Carefully check and clear the site. Dispose of fireworks safely. They should never be burnt in a confined space (eg a boiler)

Additional points to consider if you are organising a major public display

For major displays, particularly those involving category 4 'professional' fireworks or very large number of spectators, a more robust approach is obviously needed.

- Plan and mark out the areas for spectators, firing fireworks (and a safety zone around it) as well as an area where the fireworks will fall
- Think about how people will get into and out of the site. Keep pedestrian and vehicle routes apart if possible. Mark exit routes clearly and ensure they are well lit. Ensure emergency vehicles can get access to the site
- Appoint enough stewards/marshals. Make sure they understand what they are to do on the night and what they should do in the event of an emergency
- Contact the emergency services and local authority. If your site is near an airport you may need to contact them
- Signpost the first aid facilities

Guidance on Firework displays (CBI publication)

Guidance on firework displays has been produced by the Confederation of British Industry Explosives Interest Group (CBI EIG).

[Working together on firework displays \(PDF\)](#) – aimed at professional firework display organisers and operators.

[Giving your own firework display \(PDF\)](#) – aimed at all other firework displays.

Insurance

Most employers are required by law to insure against liability for injury or disease to their employees arising out of their employment. The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 ensures that you have at least a minimum level of insurance cover against any such claims.

- [More information \(PDF\)](#)

Public liability insurance is not required by health and safety law. However, if you are manufacturing or storing explosives (including fireworks) you may wish to take out public liability insurance. Many industry trade associations and professional bodies require this as a condition of membership. Professional display operators using category F4 fireworks, T2 theatrical pyrotechnics or P2 pyrotechnic articles are required by product safety law to have public liability insurance in place covering their use.