
Stay safe with fireworks

Bonfire Night is one of the highlights of the British autumn, but whilst fireworks can be captivating, they can pose a serious risk if due care is not taken.

The Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) is working with the Office for Product Safety and Standards on a campaign to raise public awareness of the need to enjoy fireworks safely and responsibly.

The campaign will ensure the public are aware of restrictions on the use of fireworks, specifically around the times of year they're allowed and curfew times, as well as warn them of the dangers of buying fireworks from non-legitimate sources.

According to St John Ambulance, thousands of people across the UK visit A&E for the treatment of fireworks-related injuries every year.

Lead Officer for Explosives and Petroleum at CTSI, Ian Hillier, gave advice on how to enjoy a safe Bonfire Night in 2018:

Only buy CE-marked fireworks

All fireworks must carry a CE mark – a manufacturer's declaration that the goods conform to European safety standards. Certain types of fireworks, found to be dangerous or erratic, were proscribed during the process of bringing fireworks under this single certification.

Hillier says: "All CE marked fireworks are reasonably safe if the instructions for use are followed".

He added: "The instructions must be in English. Foreign fireworks without English instructions are banned in the UK."

Make sure you're buying from a licensed seller

You should only ever buy fireworks from a licensed seller. "Don't buy from a man in the pub, from a white van, or from a market stall," says Hillier. "It has to be licensed premises."

If you want to check whether a shop is licensed to sell fireworks, you can check with your local fire brigade, Trading Standards, or simply ask the shopkeeper to see proof.

Keep pets inside

Animals can be distressed by the loud noises and bright flashes of light. It's best to keep them indoors around Bonfire Night, New Years, and other times of year where fireworks are frequently used, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year.

"If a pet has a particular issue with fireworks, then speak to a vet to see if there's anything that can be done to alleviate the stress," Hillier advises.

Follow the instructions

Hillier says: "Each firework will have instructions on how to safely use it. The box will also have instructions. Each will have a safe distance to stand back, which gives an indication of how dangerous the fallout from the firework is."

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“All fireworks are tested to make sure they’re safe if the instructions are followed,” says Hillier. This applies, he asserts, to even the biggest rockets you can buy for personal use.

And if a firework doesn’t go off as planned? “Don’t go back. Wait until the next morning, and then put it in a bucket of water for 24 hours.”

Take precautions

Make sure that you have a clear path to retire to a safe distance after lighting the fuse – bearing in mind it’ll be dark. You also need to make sure your garden is big enough to allow you to get to the specified safe distance.

Those setting them off should wear protective gloves and goggles.

Keep fireworks away from children

It’s illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of adult fireworks. There are four categories of fireworks: F1 ‘indoor’ can be bought by those aged 16 years and over; F2 and F3 “adult” can be bought by over 18’s and F4 are for professional use only.

Many of the problems caused by fireworks are the result of irresponsible and inconsiderate misuse by children who get hold of fireworks through illicit means. Do your best to ensure that any under-18s in your care do not have access to fireworks.

As with all age-restricted products, failure to comply with the law is a criminal offence which could carry criminal sanctions.

Just attend an organized display

The best advice is to save yourself the trouble and expense and attending an organized display instead. At such events, spectators are kept at a safe distance while qualified individuals do the work, minimising risk for everyone.

More importantly, it is likely to be a better experience for you and any firework-loving children. “Organised displays are much more exciting to watch,” says Hillier. “They tend to cost many thousands of pounds, and use fireworks that are not available to general public.”

However you choose to celebrate November 5, make sure you take heed of our guidance and stay safe with fireworks.

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Notes for Editors:

For press queries, email CTSI Press Office: pressoffice@tsi.org.uk, or call 01268 582240.

Fireworks campaign hub: <https://www.tradingstandards.uk/news-policy/campaigns/fireworks-safety-awareness-campaign>

Businesses looking for free and impartial regulatory advice on product safety and fireworks can visit: <https://www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/underage-sales/fireworks>

Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)

The Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) is a training and membership organisation that has represented the interests of the trading standards profession since 1881, both nationally and internationally. It aims to raise the profile of the profession while working towards a safer, fairer, and

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better-informed society for consumers and businesses. CTSI's members deliver frontline trading standards services in local authorities. www.tradingstandards.uk.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards

The Office for Product Safety and Standards was created in January 2018 by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to enhance protections for consumers and the environment and drive increased productivity, growth and business confidence.

Office for Product Safety and Standards is part of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.