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Fireworks Safety

Background

Fireworks are widely used during seasonal celebrations such as Bonfire Night, New Year, Diwali and other cultural events. Despite annual safety messaging, **fireworks continue to cause preventable injuries, fires, and property damage**, often involving children and vulnerable individuals.

Evidence consistently shows that the **safest way to enjoy fireworks is at an organised public display**, where safety controls, trained operators, and emergency planning significantly reduce risk. Private use presents increased danger, particularly where alcohol, poor supervision, or unsafe storage and handling are involved.

Key Information

Common Causes of Fireworks-Related Fires and Injuries

- Improper handling or misuse of fireworks
- Use of fireworks under the influence of alcohol
- Lack of supervision around children
- Returning to fireworks that have failed to ignite
- Unsafe storage or carrying fireworks in pockets
- Use in streets, public places, or near buildings
- Failure to follow safety instructions

Key Safety Messages to Reinforce

(**The Firework Code**)

- Plan private displays carefully and keep them **small and controlled**
- **Do not drink alcohol** if responsible for setting off fireworks
- Only buy fireworks from **registered or licensed sellers**
- Check fireworks carry a **valid CE or UKCA mark**
- Keep **buckets of water, a hose, or a fire extinguisher** nearby
- **Always supervise children** and never give sparklers to children under five
- Light fireworks at **arm's length using a taper**
- Stand well back once a firework is lit
- Follow the **manufacturer's instructions** exactly

- Store fireworks in a **closed, secure container**
- **Never return to a lit firework** if it does not go off
- Never carry fireworks in pockets or throw them
- Do not set off fireworks **after 11pm**, except on permitted dates
- Be considerate of neighbours and those who may be distressed by fireworks
- Keep **pets indoors** during displays

Legal Considerations

- It is illegal to buy adult fireworks if you are **under 18**
- Fireworks must not be set off between **11pm and 7am**, except:
    - Bonfire Night (midnight cut-off)
    - New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year (1am cut-off)
- Fireworks must **not be used in streets or public places**
- Fireworks can only be purchased from registered sellers during permitted periods
- Illegal sale or misuse can result in **significant fines or imprisonment**

Local authority restrictions may also apply and should be checked where relevant.

Local & National Statistics

- Around **70 fires each year in England** involve fireworks affecting homes and buildings
- Fireworks account for **hundreds of injuries annually**, many requiring hospital treatment
- Local fire data shows a clear **seasonal increase in incidents** linked to fireworks and matches
- Emergency service demand increases significantly during autumn and early winter periods

These figures highlight the importance of **consistent prevention messaging and early engagement**.

Extra Resources

- GOV.UK – Fireworks: The Law and Safety Advice
  https://www.gov.uk/fireworks-the-law
- The Firework Code
  https://www.fireworkssafety.org