This guide is intended for those organisers who are mounting firework displays for the general public.

It contains important information about your responsibilities to the public and your staff.

It will only take 10 minutes to read but could make the difference between a successful event and a tragedy.

Fireworks
A guide for organisers of public displays

dti
Department of Trade and Industry
Sharing the load and keeping authorities informed

1. Where do I begin?

- Running a display takes a lot of work, so try to share the load by planning ahead.
- Set up a committee whose members can each take responsibility for a particular task (including one person to be in charge of all safety arrangements).
- Be clear on who will do what and when.
- Be sure each member has a photocopy of this guide and follows its advice.
- If possible, try to recruit at least one person with previous experience of firework displays.
- Remember - fireworks NOT marked with 'Complies with BS7114 Part 2 1988' are suitable for use only by professionals.

2. Who should I tell?

Don't forget it's a busy time for the authorities - give them plenty of warning so they can best help you.

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<th>Organisation</th>
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<td>Fire Brigade</td>
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<td>Local Authority*</td>
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*(Check if you need a storage licence)

The Location

3. How much space will I need?

- As much as possible.
- Allow at least 50m x 20m for your firing area. Beyond this you will need a dropping zone for spent fireworks of 100m x 50m in the downwind direction.
- Spectators should be kept back on the opposite side to the dropping zone at least 25m from the firing area.

4. Where's the best site?

A clear and well-mown area, free from obstructions well away from any building, trees and hazards like overhead cables, with as many safe entrances and exits as possible. These must be away from the firing area and dropping zone.

Make sure that all entrances and exits are well lit, clearly sign-posted and kept free from obstructions. Clear away any undergrowth or very long grass. Have plenty of (metal) litter bins around the site. Make sure you can cater properly for disabled spectators. Watch out for any animals likely to be housed nearby.
5. What about car parking?

Falling fireworks can cause damage, so site any designated car parking well away from your display area and dropping zone and upwind of the display. Signpost any car park clearly and make sure that the entrance is quite separate from pedestrian access. Do not permit parking anywhere else.

- Spectators must not be allowed into your display area. If they do encroach, stop the display immediately. Prepare and erect signs to clearly show area.
- Beware of overcrowding - seek advice from the police and follow it.
- Fireworks and alcohol don’t mix. This will make crowd control more difficult.
- None of the organisers should have alcoholic drinks.
- Do not allow spectators to enter the site with their own fireworks - even sparklers. Make sure that there are signs explaining this at all entrances.

6. How do I organise the spectators?

Proper crowd control is essential and needs good planning.

- Arrange for some stewards to be responsible for just this - at least one steward for every 250 spectators. Their job won’t be finished until the display is over, the site is cleared and made safe. Your stewards should be easy to identify, perhaps with fluorescent bibs or jackets.
- Be certain that your team know what to do in an emergency and have practised safety drills.

7. How do I let off the fireworks?

With great care at all stages.

- Recruit people with previous experience of firework displays. Have as few people as possible actually involved with the fireworks.
- Do not allow smoking by your team when fireworks are being handled, or at any time during the display.
- Unpack fireworks with great care and well away from any open fire, naked flame or flammable material. Remember that they are fragile and can
easily be broken. Keep fireworks in a secure box which is kept closed.

- Before lighting any firework, read the instructions on it carefully (by torchlight).
- Make sure that the wind and the display are angled away from spectators.
- For lighting display type fireworks, a device called a Portfire is often provided by the manufacturer. Use Portfires when available and always light fireworks at arm's length. Keep unused Portfires in a metal or wooden box and never carry them in pockets.
- Alternative forms of safety lighters, such as a slow match, are often available.
- Never use matches or lighters for lighting fireworks at a display. If any firework fails to go off, don't go back to it. It could still be live and could go off in your face. Half an hour is the absolute minimum time to wait before you consider approaching it again.
- A sudden change of wind could cause aerial fireworks to fall dangerously among spectators. In very windy weather, you should consider putting off the display altogether; however disappointing that might be.

8. Must I have a bonfire?

NO. Bonfires need a lot of organising and can be a hazard. Many displays are a great success without one.

- If, after careful consideration, you do decide to have a bonfire, make one person responsible for it from early planning to final clearing up.
- Don't site it too near your display or firework storage area.
- Never use flammable liquids like paraffin or petrol to get it going as this can result in uncontrolled spread of fire or explosion.
- Check immediately before lighting that there's no animal or even a young child hidden inside.

9. And when it's all over?

The work for you and your team doesn't finish when the last firework goes off.

- Spectators need to be cleared safely from the site.
- Bonfire needs to be put out completely.
- Gather spent firework cases.
- Clear the site and ensure it is safe for people and animals to use again.

10. Gathering spent fireworks

- With a torch, use tongs, or some other suitable tool and wear strong gloves.
- Don't allow any children to collect firework cases.
- Burning the spent cases is potentially dangerous and should be done with great care only after all your spectators have gone.
- If any fireworks look as if they haven't gone off after at least half an hour, douse them in a bucket of water and ask the fire brigade for advice.
Other advice available

Comprehensive guides on organising firework displays are on sale from good booksellers or direct from HSE Books, PO BOX 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS

Tel 01787 881165 Fax 01787 313995

Visit the fireworks safety website on www.fireworksafety.co.uk.

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