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Fireworks Safety

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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.

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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.

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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

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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

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- 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>

