

## Firework Safety

Fireworks cause hundreds of avoidable injuries every year.

- Between the years 1996 - 2000, 2258 people were hurt and required hospital treatment. In the same period there were four deaths.
- In 2000 there were 972 injuries and regretfully two deaths.
- In 2000 the highest number of injuries (421) occurred at family or private parties, followed by incidents in the street or other public places
- In 2002 half of all injuries happened to children under the age of 16 years of age.

Every year hospital casualty departments see injuries that are caused through people not handling fireworks properly. The main causes of injury are: -

- Not following instructions
- Lighting too many fireworks at once
- Going back to a firework once it's been lit
- Lack of supervision
- Getting too close to fireworks

### The law relating to fireworks

The age limit for buying fireworks is 18 – including sparklers. Since the end of 1997, it has been against the law to sell or supply bangers, aerial shells, mini-rockets and some types of bigger Roman Candles to the public.

No one should buy fireworks other than responsible adults who are going to supervise the use of those fireworks in their own garden. It is illegal for shopkeepers to break open retail packs of fireworks and sell them individually. The reason why is that many of the instructions for using fireworks safely are printed on the packet and not on the individual firework.

It is an offence punishable by fine to let fireworks off in a public place. So how do you define a public place? For simplicity regard it as anywhere other than in your own back garden. The street outside is a public place, as is the council park, the bus station, the schoolyard, the football stadium, the youth centre.

Twelve years ago a British Standard known as BS 7114 was introduced. This is a safety standard which sets out specifications and test procedures for fireworks. For example, fireworks, complying with BS 7114:

- Are limited as to the explosive content
- Have recommended safe distances for viewing them
- Have strict times for how long the fuse will burn to enable people to move out of the way.

NEVER buy or use fireworks which do not show on the labels that they comply with BS 7114

## Alcohol and fireworks

Firework parties with family and friends have become increasingly popular in recent years.

90% of firework parties in back gardens involve alcohol, 84% of people setting off fireworks have consumed at least 2-3 units of alcohol. The consumption of alcohol increases the risk on injury in these circumstances; it also affects the ability of adults to properly supervise children during the display.

- Never drink alcohol if you are setting off fireworks or tending to a bonfire
- Nominate responsible persons who are not drinking alcohol to take charge of the display
- If guests at your party are drinking alcohol, keep them well away from fireworks
- Consider limiting the availability of alcohol drinks until after all fireworks have been sent off
- Don't carry fireworks in your pockets to street parties or celebrations

## Organised displays

The following points are intended for those organizers who are organising firework displays for the general public.

- Plan ahead
- Contact the Right People – the Fire Brigade, the Police, First Aid Service, Local Authority
- Be prepared
- Pick the Right Location
- Safe Car Parking is Essential
- Keeping in Control – ensure proper crowd control
- Experience Counts – learn from other peoples displays and their failings
- Plan Bonfires too – displays can be successful without them
- Plan for tidy up after the event.

Further information can be gained through the DTI leaflet 'Safe and Successful Firework Displays'

## Pet Safety

Every year thousands of animals will suffer due to our festivities and celebrations, many animals end up in rescue centers after running away from home.

Animals have very acute hearing. Loud bangs and whistles may cause them actual pain in their ears.

The DTI and The Blue Cross have put some information together on how to keep your pets safe during festivities and celebrations.

### Remember...

- If using sparkler, have a bucket of water nearby. When sparklers have gone out they should be put hot end down in the water.
- NEVER throw discarded fireworks onto bonfires.
- Wear the correct clothing – always wear gloves, do not wear nylon clothing which melts against the skin, don't wear open neck shirts, t-shirts or shorts, tuck scarves in.
- Don't mess around with fireworks
- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114
- Don't drink alcohol if setting off fireworks
- Keep fireworks in a closed box
- Follow the instructions on each firework
- Light them at arm's length, using a taper
- Stand well back
- Never go near a firework that has been lit – even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode
- Always supervise children around fireworks
- Never give sparklers to a child under five
- Keep pets indoors

We recommend going to formally organized displays not only because the risk of accidents occurring is generally reduced and you tend to get a better quality display.