

Stay Safe during Halloween, Bonfire & Fireworks Week

Staying safe

Staying safe during Halloween, Bonfire and Fireworks week is as important as having fun. Anti-social behaviour associated with the Halloween and firework period has become a major issue for many communities in the UK. For example, Halloween and Bonfire night and the days running up to them, are traditionally some of the busiest nights of the year for the police, the fire brigade and other agencies.

The anti-social use of fireworks and the resultant damage which can be caused to property is a serious concern, posing a threat to all types of buildings, including commercial and residential properties, and the business community. Here are some of our tips on staying safe during the period previously dubbed as “mischief week”.

Whilst mainly focusing on Halloween and Bonfire night, these measures will also apply to other events. Fireworks are also used at other times of the year to celebrate New Year, Diwali and Chinese New Year. Following these handy hints and tips won't take the fun out of the celebrations but they will help you to celebrate safely and reduce the risks posed by fireworks.

In the workplace

During this period it's even more important to review your business close down procedures; here are some basic precautions to reduce the risk posed by fireworks:

- Ensure that all areas of the premises are made secure at the end of the working day and doors, windows, skylights and other possible means of entry through which fireworks could be introduced are properly closed and locked.
- In areas where the risk of antisocial behaviour is perceived as high, consideration should be given to protecting letter boxes internally with proprietary metal containers, designed to contain fires from lighted materials such as fireworks. A number of such products are widely available, including those which incorporate an automatic fire extinguisher, offering enhanced protection.
- Take particular care to ensure that all yards and open areas surrounding the premises are clear of accumulated rubbish and that waste bins are appropriately located and secured.
- Timber pallets, plastic crates and other combustible materials stored in the open should be kept to a minimum and located a suitable distance away from the buildings.
- Flammable liquids and gases should be confined to their designated storage facilities.
- Vegetation surrounding the buildings is cut back and removed.

Halloween costumes

Children's fancy dress costumes are treated as toys under current safety standards.

Under EN71-2, outfits are set alight in controlled conditions. The flame must not spread faster than 3cm per second. Anything with a burning rate between 1cm and 3cm per second must carry a label saying: 'Warning! Keep away from fire'

Those that pass can carry a CE safety marking, but there is growing concern that these can be easily faked.

At home

If you decide to get together with family and friends, here are some tips on staying safe when using fireworks:

- Never keep fireworks in the house – store in a secure, safe place.
- Do not attach fireworks to sheds or outbuildings.
- Do not light fireworks inside the home, including sparklers.
- Only buy fireworks that comply with British Standard 7114 or its European equivalent. Instructions should be in English.
- Don't drink alcohol if you're lighting fireworks.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box.
- Follow the instructions on each firework and be sure they're suitable for home use.
- Light fireworks at arm's length using a taper.
- Stand well back.
- Never go near a firework that has been lit. If it hasn't yet gone off, it could still explode.
- Never throw fireworks or put them in your pocket.
- Always supervise children around fireworks.
- Keep pets indoors.

Sparkler use

- Light sparklers 1 at a time.
- Always wear gloves and closed-toed shoes.
- Don't give sparklers to children under the age of 5.
- Hold the sparkler out at arm's length.
- The stick can remain hot long after the flame is gone, so it should be disposed of in a bucket of water.

Useful info

- You must not set off fireworks between 11pm and 7am. The exceptions are:
 - Bonfire Night, when the cut off is midnight
 - New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year, when the cut off is 1am
- You can be fined up to £5,000 and/or imprisoned for up to 6 months for selling or using fireworks illegally. You could also get an on-the-spot fine of £90.
- You can only buy fireworks (including sparklers) from registered sellers for private use on these dates:
 - 15 October to 10 November
 - 26 to 31 December
 - 3 days before Diwali and Chinese New Year
- At other times you can only buy fireworks from licensed shops.
- The law states you must not set off or throw fireworks (including sparklers) in the streets or other public places.

Source: <http://www.gov.uk/fireworks-the-law>

Remember, remember to stay safe and have fun!