

Firework Noise

- **Why worry about Fireworks?**

Fireworks are widely used to mark public and private celebrations, especially around Bonfire Night and New Years Eve.

While they can add excitement to occasions, fireworks can frighten and disturb people and animals. In particular children and the elderly can be intimidated and scared by firework noise. Farm animals have literally been scared to death; startled animals have been injured, killed and caused accidents when bolting; and domestic animals can become panicked leading to vicious and destructive behaviour.

A cocktail of chemicals produces the bright colours and effects in fireworks. Fireworks emit heat, light and sound energy along with carbon dioxide and other gases and residues. Gunpowder is usually a main component of fireworks, so sulphur compounds will be emitted along with small amounts of particulates, metal oxides and organic compounds. On and around Bonfire Night, there is often a noticeable increase in pollution from particulates and dioxins. Approximately 14% of UK dioxin emissions are produced around Bonfire Night – most of this coming from bonfires rather than fireworks. Current research indicates that deposits of pollutants from fireworks do not pose a risk to soil or water.

- **What laws cover nuisance and danger caused by fireworks?**

Throwing or setting off fireworks in the street is an offence under the Explosives Act 1875. The Police enforce this, with a fine up to £5000.

If a local authority officer judges noise from fireworks to be a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, they can issue an abatement notice. However, as firework noise is short lived, in practice it can prove difficult to locate the source.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 local authorities have the power to issue an anti-social behaviour order to anyone causing 'harassment, alarm or distress'. Disobeying an order carries a prison sentence of up to 5 years.

- **When can I use fireworks?**

The Fireworks Regulations 2004 prohibit anyone under 18 from possessing fireworks, and anyone except professionals from possessing display fireworks. These regulations also prohibit the use of fireworks at night (11pm – 7am) in England and Wales, with extensions for the following festivals:

- Until 1.00am on the night of the Chinese New Year
- Until 1.00am on the night of Diwali
- Until 1.00am on New Years Eve
- Until midnight on 5 November

The Police enforce these regulations. There is a penalty of up to £5000 or 6 months in prison for breach of the curfew.

- **Avoid firework frights**

Fireworks don't have to be ear splitting to be fun. We can enjoy them in safety, without causing annoyance to neighbours and their pets and livestock, or to wildlife. If you have your own firework display, remember these simple guidelines:

- Tell neighbours – particularly important if they are elderly, have children or pets
- Use appropriate fireworks – when buying fireworks try to avoid really noisy ones. Your supplier should be able to tell you what they are selling
- Make sure pets and other animals are safely away from fireworks
- Consider timing – if you are using fireworks for a celebration a Friday or Saturday is preferable, and make sure they are over by 11pm
- Avoid setting off fireworks in unsuitable weather – if it is still and misty or air quality is poor, pollution could be a problem. Strong winds can be hazardous. Check air quality on 0800 556677 or <http://www.airquality.co.uk>
- Let off your fireworks in an open garden area – noise bounces off buildings and smoke and pollution can build up in enclosed spaces
- If a neighbour complains that you are disturbing them, their pets or livestock, be considerate
- After your display, clear up firework fallout and dispose of it safely

For further information please contact the Pollution Control section of Environmental Health on

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