

Health and Safety Newsletter

November 2021

Welcome to the MEH Consultants Ltd November newsletter.

Not our usual direction with the MEH monthly safety newsletter but a bit of consumer safety advice regarding this month's festivities. We are warned every year of the dangers of fireworks and how much damage they can do if they aren't properly controlled. Here are some tips on firework safety and how to ensure a safe event.

Fireworks safety

November is one of the busiest times of year for fireworks, particularly the 5 November, with a whole host of mass firework displays due to be taking place over the next week, as well as smaller private displays from residential properties.

According to Fire Service, more children than adults get hurt by fireworks. Over the past few years over 350 pre-school children, some only a year old, were treated in hospital for fireworks injuries. Furthermore, the Fireworks Forum states that more 1,300 people each year are injured by fireworks with over 900 of them needing to go to hospital. **Sparklers** cause more injuries than air-bombs, bangers, rockets and roman candles combined and up to three sparklers burning together can generate the same heat as a blowtorch!



The key to the successful management of fireworks is appropriate risk assessment and emergency preparedness. Those organising official displays will need to factor in matters as disparate as weather, wind direction, fuel for the bonfire and crowd safety.

The same principles apply to families holding local celebrations. Whilst the risk assessment will likely be a lot less formal and seldom reduced to paper those in charge will need to think about the dynamic of small children, teenagers and those who may have had an alcoholic drink or two in establishing a safe perimeter for participants to stay safe.

Did you know? Under the Firework Regulations 2004, it is an offence to let fireworks off during night hours (11pm to 7am), except during Bonfire Night celebrations (15 Oct-10 Nov), Diwali and the proceeding 3 days, New Year's celebrations (26-31 Dec), and Chinese New Year and the proceeding 3 days.

Advice for organisers

- **Handle fireworks with great care** at all stages
- **Ensure people have sufficient experience** and have as few people as possible involved
- **Do not allow smoking** when fireworks are being handled, or at any time during the display
- **Unpack fireworks with great care** and well away from any open fire or naked flames
- **Keep fireworks in a secure box** which is kept closed
- **Read the instructions carefully**
- **Wind direction and fireworks should always be angled away** from spectators
- **Always light fireworks at arm's length,**
- **If any firework fails to go off, don't go back to it,** it could still be live, half an hour is the absolute minimum time to wait before you consider approaching it again
- **Pay attention to the weather,** a sudden change of wind could cause fireworks to fall dangerously among spectators
- **In very windy weather, you should consider cancelling the display,** however disappointing that may be.

Fireworks at home

Make sure you buy fireworks from licenced in-store and online retailers. Do not buy fireworks from unknown retailers on social media sites. Remember it is illegal for under 18's to buy fireworks.

There are various categories of fireworks. Category F1 fireworks present a very low hazard and are intended for use in confined areas, including inside domestic buildings. Categories F2 and F3 fireworks are on general sale to the public but only category F2 fireworks are intended for outdoor use in confined areas (such as a small garden). Check you have enough space to safely use a firework before you buy it. Category information can be found on the label.

Individuals should however bear in mind that, the safest way to enjoy fireworks is at an organised display, with far fewer people being injured at larger events than at smaller family or private parties. Always follow the [Firework Code](#).

Upcoming training

Our full training portfolio is now available and face to face courses are up and running again. Why not join us for our Fire Awareness training, or if you have fire responsibilities in your workplace, our very popular Fire Warden training is also available.

Want to know more about any of the topics discussed or simply have a H&S issue on your mind, please get in touch. We love hearing from you.

