

bonfire night safety

Bonfires and fireworks are a fun way of celebrating but every year hundreds of children are taken to hospital after an accident. More accidents happen at home than anywhere else and children are most at risk.

Public displays are often safer – and more spectacular - than parties at home. If you are planning a home display, follow the safety tips below to make sure you have a safe celebration.

Choosing fireworks

Make sure the fireworks you buy are meant for home use, are suitable for the size of your garden and are marked with British Standard number (BS 7114).

You will also need the following:

- metal box with lid for storing fireworks during your display
- torch for checking instructions
- taper for lighting fireworks
- bucket (for water)
- bucket or other container of soft earth to stick fireworks in
- board or other non-flammable, rigid surface for flat-bottomed fireworks
- supports or launches for catherine wheels or rockets

Before the display

Make sure you have read the instructions on your fireworks and have all the equipment you need ready.

If you are having a bonfire make sure it is well away from houses, trees, hedges, fences, sheds. Build it carefully so that it is not likely to topple over when lit. Use firelighters to get it going – never use petrol or paraffin even if it seems slow to start.

During the display

Choose one person to be responsible for your fireworks. That person should not drink any alcohol before or during the display

Supervise children and make sure they are standing well back from the fireworks

Light fireworks one at a time using a taper held at arm's length. Remind yourself of instructions using a torch

Keep unused fireworks in a metal box with the lid closed.

Never return to a lit firework

Keep pets indoors and make sure all windows and doors are closed so they cannot get out

Do not smoke near unlit fireworks

Never put fireworks in pockets

Never run with fireworks

Make sure you know what to do in an emergency – that you know basic first aid for cooling and protecting a burn and that you have emergency numbers to hand.

Safety with sparklers

Sparklers are not suitable for children under five – they cannot understand how to use them safely

Wear gloves when holding sparklers and keep them at arm's length away from the body

Children over five can safely hold sparklers but an adult should light them. Make sure children do not run with sparklers or wave them around near anyone else

As soon as a sparkler is finished plunge it hot end down into a bucket of water. Empty the bucket when you have finished – children can drown in just a few centimeters of water.

Never hold a baby or small child and a sparkler at the same time

First aid advice

Advice on first aid can be obtained from:

St John Ambulance. See www.sja.org.uk or call 08700 10 49 50

British Red Cross. See www.redcross.org.uk or call 020 7235 5454

For statistics on firework injuries or safety advice on other areas see the Child Accident Prevention Trust website or contact us at the address below.

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