



Safety in Scouting in Berkshire



FIREWORKS AND FIREWORK DISPLAYS

Watching firework displays give pleasure to many, children and adults alike, and indeed, organisations such as Scouting can derive significant incomes by staging public displays. However, there can be downsides – terrible burns when things go wrong, suffering by family pets, and the misuse by youngsters to cause considerable public nuisance.

Staging public displays

Preparation

Buy fireworks from a reputable outlet and make sure that they conform and are marked to British Standards (BS 7114).

There are different categories of fireworks. Members of the public can buy and set off most of the fireworks that come under Categories 1 to 3. Always read the packet carefully and make sure that the fireworks you buy are suitable for the place where you are going to set them off.

However, some fireworks can only be bought and used by firework professionals. These include: air bombs; aerial shells, aerial maroons, shells-in-mortar and maroons-in-mortar; all bangers; mini rockets; fireworks with erratic flight; some Category 2 and 3 fireworks which exceed certain size limits; and all Category 4 fireworks.

Running a display takes a lot of work, so try to share the load by planning ahead :

- Set up a team whose members can each take responsibility for a particular aspect of the event. If possible, try to recruit at least one person with previous experience of firework displays. Carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment (remember POR !), and contact Scout Insurance Services.
- Contact the local fire and police if the display is likely to attract large numbers, and make sure you've got the provision of first aid covered. Warn neighbours to keep pets indoors.
- Ask the fireworks provider to deliver your fireworks and ask for storage recommendations. Read the accompanying guidance.
- Practice the various team tasks in the dark, including emergency response (and make sure there will be plenty of torches).
- Arrange some form of public address system – as a safety measure, not just for commentary. A loud hailer will do as a bare minimum.
- Consider the provision of fire fighting equipment.
- You should choose a large, clear and well-mown area free from obstructions, well away from any buildings, trees and hazards like overhead cables, with as many safe entrances and exits as possible. These must be away from the firing area and dropping zone. Make sure that all entrances are well lit, clearly signposted and kept free from obstructions. Clear away any undergrowth or very long grass.
- The display site needs to be large enough to cope with the types of fireworks to

be used, a change in wind direction or strength, and the expected number of spectators. Allow at least 50m x 20m for your firing area, and a dropping zone for spent fireworks of 100m x 50m in the downwind direction. Spectators should be kept back on the opposite side to the dropping zone at least 25m from the firing area.

- Proper crowd control is essential and needs good planning. Arrange for some stewards (in hi-vis clothing) to be responsible for just this.

The event

- Do not allow spectators to enter the site with their own fireworks – even sparklers. Make sure that there are signs explaining this at all entrances, and in publicity prior to the display.
- Take great care at all times. Know which fireworks are going to be let off in what order. Take the fireworks from a secure container only when they are to be let off.
- Keep fireworks in a secure box which is kept closed. Unpack fireworks with great care and well away from any naked flame. Before lighting any firework, read the instructions on it carefully (by torchlight).
- Consider using proprietary firework lighter (ask your firework provider), and never use matches or lighters for lighting fireworks.
- If any firework fails to go off, don't go back to it. It could still be live and could go off in your face. Half an hour is the absolute minimum time to wait before you consider approaching it again.
- Spectators need to be cleared promptly but safely from the site at the end of the event; do not permit the public to loiter, and certainly do not allow the public (especially children) to collect firework cases..
- Look for used fireworks with a torch and use tongs or some other suitable tool, and wear strong gloves to retrieve these. If any fireworks look as if they haven't gone off after at least half an hour, soak them in a bucket of water and ask the Fire Brigade for advice.

Further Information : <http://www.hse.gov.uk/explosives/fireworks/using.htm>

Safety at Public Bonfire Events will be the subject of a separate factsheet

Howard de Silva

County Safety In Scouting Coordinator

September, 2007