



Firework Displays:

A guide for local councils & not-for-profit organisations



Firework displays for local councils and not-for-profits

Public celebrations such as Guy Fawkes, Diwali and New Year have seen an increase in managed firework displays. Like all outdoor events, organised firework displays should be planned and managed effectively in advance to minimise any associated dangers and hazards. Here we provide some tips on how to make sure you properly plan and organise the event, including considerations for selecting firework display operators.

Before the event

Before you get started, it is important to speak to your insurer and make sure you have appropriate cover in place for your event. If you're using a third party display operator, you should check they have suitable insurance in place too.

During the planning phase, it is important for display organisers to ensure the following preparations have been completed:

Create an event committee

Establish an event committee with individuals responsible for dedicated tasks, including overall safety; ideally involve individuals with previous experience of organising firework displays.

Types of fireworks

Consider what type of fireworks you will include in your display and decide whether you will require the help of a professional fireworks display operator. There are different categories of firework. Categories F1 - 3 can be purchased and set off without specialist knowledge, whereas Category F4 require a professional operator.

Operating the display

If you are operating the display without a professional, make sure you check the quality of the products you are purchasing. They should come from a reputable supplier and carry a CE mark, with full safety instructions.

Risk assess

Ensure a risk assessment has been carried out of the proposed event. Further guidance can be found in the [Red Firework Guide](#) (for displays you are running) and [Blue Firework Guide](#) (for displays run in conjunction with professionals).

Local authority & area

Advise the local authority, neighbouring properties and emergency services (police and fire) at least 28 days in advance. Their level of involvement will depend on the size and type of event. If you're close an airport, consider notifying them of your event so it will not impact on any flights.

First aid

Contact local first aid providers regarding the provision of first aid facilities.

Emergency plan

Establish an emergency plan which covers what to do if things go wrong or the unexpected happens.

Crowd and volunteers

Think about access to and from the site. If your launch site is unusual (such as a bridge or roof) you should use a professional display operator.

Ensure crowd safety is the centre of your plans. You'll need to have a safe distance from the display as well as making sure that the allocated parking is far away from any drop zones.

Bonfires

If you are planning a bonfire, they present a much higher risk due to potential stray sparks. Bonfires should be sited well away from the fireworks firing site and should only be lit after all fireworks have been fired. It's important to inform your insurer if you plan to have a bonfire as well as fireworks.

Setting up

Employing professional operators

If you're using professional firework display operators make sure you consider the following:

- References from previous events, including safety track record
- Risk assessments – do they follow industry guidance e.g. the Blue Firework Guide
- Health and Safety Policy
- Health and safety arrangements - method statement, safe systems of work, etc
- Public liability insurance
- Training records
- Professional qualifications

The risk assessment from the contractor should include the firing arc, drop zone, fire spotters, fireworks compliance with British standards and adequate storage of the fireworks. This is in addition to more general considerations such as the safety of the display operators, other third parties (such as lighting technicians and spectators) and buildings and other structures.

For further sources on selecting a professional display operator, refer to Appendix 1 of the [Red Firework Guide](#).

Organising your site

Your site should be divided into four separate areas, with minimum distances that adhere to industry guidance between each:

- Spectator area
- Safety area (between spectator area and firing area)
- Firing area
- Drop zone or fall-out area (where spent fireworks will land)

As well as considering the different areas within your site, it is also important to plan for what happens if things change at the last minute, for example, if the wind changes direction or increases substantially before the event, then consider postponing or cancelling the event. You should also ensure you have a planned procedure for stopping the display or closing the event.

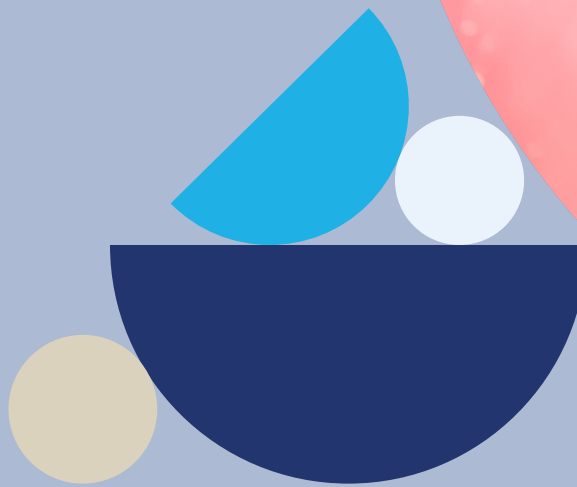


The day of your event

Final tips to make sure you are prepared for the day of your event:

- Stewards should be provided with fluorescent clothing, torches and an effective means of communication. If they are stationed near to the firing or drop zone areas, then hard hats and ear defenders should be worn
- Signs should be displayed to direct members of the public to the correct routes, spectator areas and emergency exits
- Prohibit spectators from using their own fireworks
- At any organised event, the firing should only be undertaken by a fully qualified and competent person, or by a professional contractor

You can find further safety tips in the [government's community guide to organising bonfires and fireworks](#).



Further information

Below are a few links and resources that you might find useful:

- [HSE Guidelines: Organising a firework display](#)
- [Red Guide - Your own firework display](#)
- [Blue Guide - Fire work displays with professionals](#)
- [Celebrating with bonfires and fireworks: a community guide to organising bonfires and fireworks](#)

