



## **Organising Bonfires & Firework Displays – points to consider**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1. A lot of YFC Clubs celebrate Guys Fawkes night on or close to 5<sup>th</sup> November. Some YFC Club members enjoy a night out with fellow Club members at a large Firework Display and Bonfire night organised locally by another charity (for example Round Table or the Lions Clubs) or the local authority and this is very much encouraged.
- 1.2. Other YFC Clubs organise smaller displays for their own club and local community. This guide is aimed at the organisers of these smaller events.
- 1.3. Below are some tips and guidance to help Firework Display organisers.

### **2. Planning the event – early stages**

- 2.1. Think about who will operate the display. There is no reason why you should not light a display yourselves provided it only contains fireworks in categories 1, 2 and 3. But remember, category 4 fireworks may only be used by professional firework display operators. In untrained hands they can be lethal.
- 2.2. Prepare a Risk Assessment and identify potential risk making plans to eliminate or reduce the risks.
- 2.3. Consider whether the site is suitable and large enough for your display (see annex one- Site Planning), including a bonfire if you are having one.
- 2.4. Is there space for the fireworks to land well away from spectators?
- 2.5. Remember to check in daylight for overhead power lines and other obstructions.
- 2.6. What is the direction of the prevailing wind? What would happen if it changed?
- 2.7. Think about what you would do if things go wrong.
- 2.8. Make sure there is someone who will be responsible for calling the emergency services.
- 2.9. Make sure there is someone who will be responsible for safe and calm evacuation of the site.
- 2.10. Neighbouring land occupiers (*important*). Advance warning of the event and that fireworks will be set off must be done as early as possible- preferably 4 to 6 weeks before the event and again as a reminder 1 week before the event. Leave a mobile number of the Event Organiser with all land occupiers.
- 2.11. Local institutions- as a part of the Display's good public relations, advise any local businesses and organisations (parish councils, residential homes, pubs and restaurants etc).

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- 2.12. If your event is near the coast, inform the Coastguard service.
  - 2.13. If your event is near an airport or aerodrome, inform the Civil Aviation Authority.
  - 2.14. **Book first aiders or paramedics. *First aiders should be onsite for the duration of the display/bonfire.***
  - 2.15. If you are not sure whether to contact anyone, do so anyway.
  - 2.16. Make sure you obtain the fireworks from a reputable supplier.
  - 2.17. If the display is to be provided by a professional firework display operator make sure that you are clear on who does what especially in the event of an emergency.
  - 2.18. Ensure you have a suitable place to store the fireworks. Your firework supplier or local authority should be able to advise
  - 2.19. If you plan on selling alcohol the bar should be well away from the display site
3. **On the day of the event**
- 3.1. Recheck the site, weather conditions and wind direction.
  - 3.2. Don't let anyone into the zone where the fireworks will fall -or let anyone other than the display operator or firing team into the firing zone or the safety zone around it.
  - 3.3. Discourage spectators from bringing drink onto the site.
  - 3.4. Don't let spectators bring their own fireworks onto the site
  - 3.5. If you will also have a bonfire at the display then you should:-
    - 3.5.1. Check the structure is sound and does not have small children or animals inside it before lighting it.
    - 3.5.2. Not use petrol or paraffin to light the fire.
    - 3.5.3. Have only one person responsible for lighting the fire. That person, and any helpers, should wear suitable clothing (eg substantial outer garment made of wool or other low-flammable material).
    - 3.5.4. Make sure that the person lighting the fire and any helpers know what to do in the event of a burn injury or clothing catching fire.
  - 3.6. **Never attempt to relight fireworks. *Keep well clear of fireworks that have failed to go off.***



**4. The morning after**

- 4.1. Carefully check and clear the site.
- 4.2. Dispose of fireworks safely. They should never be burnt in a confined space (eg a boiler).

**5. Additional points to consider if you are organising a major public display**

- 5.1. For major displays, particularly those involving category 4 'professional' fireworks or a very large number of spectators, a more robust approach is obviously needed. See point 7 (below) onward.
- 5.2. Plan and mark out the areas for spectators, firing fireworks (and a safety zone around it) as well as an area where the fireworks will fall.
- 5.3. Think about how people will get into and out of the site. Keep pedestrian and vehicle routes apart if possible.
- 5.4. Mark exit routes clearly and ensure they are well lit. Ensure emergency vehicles can get access to the site.
- 5.5. Appoint enough stewards/marshals. Make sure they understand what they are to do on the night and what they should do in the event of an emergency.
- 5.6. Contact the emergency services and local authority. If your site is near an airport you may need to contact them signpost the first aid facilities

**6. Insurance**

- 6.1. Although it is not required by health and safety law, if you are holding a public firework display, you require public liability insurance.
- 6.2. This Public Liability Insurance is provided by the NFU Mutual Insurance Scheme in place for YFCs.
- 6.3. The NFU Mutual does apply special conditions when a YFC Club is organising a Firework Display and these conditions MUST BE APPLIED IN FULL for the insurance to remain in place.

**6.4. Bonfires & Firework Displays - Conditions of Insurance from the NFU Mutual**

- 6.4.1. The local fire brigade, police and first aid association should be informed and a drill prepared for calling out the emergency services.
- 6.4.2. The bonfire must not be lit within 12 metres of any road, railway, building, structure, overhead cable, woodland, bracken or similar combustible material. In addition, dangerous rubbish such as foam-filled furniture, tyres, plastic bags, aerosols, tins of paint and bottles should not be burnt (check fire before igniting) and the bonfire must be stable so that it does not fall to one side.



- 6.4.3. The bonfire or firework display areas must be roped off to provide a minimum distance between the display and spectators of preferably 50 metres but not less than 22 metres.
- 6.4.4. Authorised adults only to enter the roped off area to tend the bonfire or to ignite the fireworks. These should be lit at arm's length using a safety firework lighter or fuse wick. The organiser should retreat quickly after lighting and keep well back. **THEY SHOULD NEVER RETURN TO A FIREWORK ONCE LIT** it may still be live and could go off in their face. **FIREWORKS MUST NOT BE THROWN, KEPT IN POCKETS OR PLAYED WITH.**
- 6.4.5. A responsible adult must at all times be in direct charge of safety matters.
- 6.4.6. Fireworks must be contained in a metal receptacle fitted with a lid and taken out one at a time, the instructions on each firework being followed carefully. Instructions must be read by torch, **NEVER A NAKED FLAME.**
- 6.4.7. Flammable liquid such as paraffin or petrol should not be used to light the bonfire use firelighters.
- 6.4.8. Stewards should be appointed to guide spectators and fire extinguishers must be kept on hand as well as buckets of water and sand.
- 6.4.9. Water should be poured on the bonfire embers to ensure that they have gone out completely before the site is left unattended and the used fireworks collected with the utmost care, doused with water and either buried or placed in a metal container. **CHILDREN MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO COLLECT USED FIREWORKS.**

## **7. Organising the event - larger events**

- 7.1. One person must be in overall control of the event and holds the ultimate responsibility for the event health and safety- the *Event Organiser*.
- 7.2. An event committee is recommended to share the proper planning and hosting of the event, with each person holding a particular responsibility. For example:-
  - 7.2.1. Committee member A      Event Organiser with overall responsibility including safety management.
  - 7.2.2. Committee member B      Ordering fireworks
  - 7.2.3. Committee member C      Storing and setting off fireworks
  - 7.2.4. Committee member D      Liaising with Fire Service and Police
  - 7.2.5. Committee member E      Liaising with local community
  - 7.2.6. Committee member F      Marketing and promoting the event
  - 7.2.7. Committee member G      Site Manager
  - 7.2.8. Committee member H      Spectator management
  - 7.2.9. Committee member I      Car parking
  - 7.2.10. Committee member J      Emergency evacuation and clear exits
  - 7.2.11. And so on...



## 8. Who to contact before the event

- 8.1. The local fire service *must be* contacted at least 28 days before the event.
- 8.2. The police *must be* informed and advise them of the location, site, and layout including all entrances and exits.
- 8.3. Local authority under entertainments legislation.
  - 8.3.1. The authority may also be able to help with compliance with legislation and other matters such as minimising noise nuisance and complying with local bye-laws.
- 8.4. If in doubt about storing fireworks before the display, the trading standards (or sometimes the fire service) may offer guidance.
- 8.5. Neighbouring land occupiers (*important*). Advance warning of the event and that fireworks will be set off must be done as early as possible- preferably 4 to 6 weeks before the event and again as a reminder 1 week before the event. Leave a mobile number of the Event Organiser with all land occupiers.
- 8.6. Local institutions- as a part of the Display's good public relations, advise any local businesses and organisations. (Parish councils, residential homes, pubs and restaurants etc).
- 8.7. If you event is near the coast, inform the Coastguard service.
- 8.8. If you event is near an airport or aerodrome, inform the Civil Aviation Authority.
- 8.9. **Book first aiders or paramedics. *First aiders should be onsite for the duration of the display/bonfire.***
- 8.10. If you are not sure whether to contact anyone, do so anyway.
- 8.11. A procedure must be prepared for calling out the emergency services- all committee members must know what to do in the event of an incident.

## 9. Selecting a safe site for the Bonfire and Display

- 9.1. Consider if the proposed site is suitable and large enough for the planned display and bonfire.
- 9.2. Check the direction of the prevailing wind and plan what will happen if this changes.
- 9.3. The bonfire **must not be lit within 15 metres** of any road, railway, building, structure, overhead cable, woodland, bracken or similar combustible material or any rights of way.



- 9.4. In addition, dangerous rubbish such as foam-filled furniture, tyres, plastic bags, aerosols, tins of paint and bottles should not be burnt (check before igniting) and the bonfire must be stable so that it does not fall to one side.
- 9.5. Look out for power and communication lines – reject any site with any overhead cables running through it.
- 9.6. Also trees and overhanging branches – reject sites where these might impede the firing of the fireworks or where the debris of fall out might get caught.
10. **Site layout for Displays with aerial fireworks and a Bonfire:** See **Annex 1**
  - 10.1. The site should comprise of:-
    - 10.1.1. Spectator area
    - 10.1.2. Safety area – a clear area between the spectators and the firing area to ensure spectators are a safe distance from the fireworks during the display
    - 10.1.3. Firing area – from which the fireworks are set off
    - 10.1.4. Fall out area (dropping zone) – an area kept clear of all people where debris and spent aerial fireworks land.
    - 10.1.5. Bonfire area – an area provide for the bonfire if there is one.
      - 10.1.5.1. Bonfires **must be** downwind of the spectator area.
  - 10.2. The bonfire or firework display areas (firing + safety + fall-out areas) must be roped off.
  - 10.3. The minimum distance between the display and spectators should preferably be 50 metres but **not less** than 25 metres.
  - 10.4. If you plan on selling alcohol the bar should be well away from the display site.
11. **Storage of fireworks**
  - 11.1. Fireworks must kept in the packaging in which they were supplied, in a secure, cool, dry place where there are no naked flames or other sources of ignition and no highly inflammable substances. A metal receptacle fitted with a lid is recommended.
  - 11.2. Your firework supplier or local authority should be able to advise.
12. **On the day of the event**
  - 12.1. Recheck the site, weather conditions and wind direction.
  - 12.2. Don't let anyone into the zone where the fireworks will fall
  - 12.3. **Fireworks**





- 12.3.1. Fireworks in categories 1, 2 & 3 only can be used when the firing team comprises of responsible persons from the organising committee.
- 12.3.2. If category 4 fireworks are used, they can only be used by profession firework display operators.
- 12.3.3. The firework firing team only are to be permitted into the firing zone or the safety zone around it.
- 12.3.4. Fireworks must be taken out one at a time and the instructions on each firework must be followed carefully. Instructions must be read by torch, NEVER A NAKED FLAME.
- 12.3.5. Fireworks should be lit at arm's length using a safety firework lighter or fuse wick. The organiser should retreat quickly after lighting and keep well back. THEY SHOULD NEVER RETURN TO A FIREWORK ONCE LIT it may still be live and could go off in their face.
- 12.3.6. FIREWORKS MUST NOT BE THROWN, KEPT IN POCKETS OR PLAYED WITH.

12.4. **Bonfire.** If you will also have a bonfire at the display then you should:-

- 12.4.1. Check the structure is sound and will not fall over or collapse and does not have small children or animals inside it before lighting it.
- 12.4.2. Not use flammable liquid such as petrol or paraffin to light the fire. Use firelighters.
- 12.4.3. Have only one person responsible for lighting the fire. That person, and any helpers, should wear suitable clothing (eg a substantial outer garment made of wool or other low-flammable material).
- 12.4.4. Make sure that the person lighting the fire and any helpers know what to do in the event of a burn injury or clothing catching fire.

### 13. At the event

- 13.1. **A responsible adult must at all times be in direct charge of safety matters.**
- 13.2. **Stewards** should be appointed to guide spectators. Their role should be primarily to:-
  - 13.2.1. Discourage spectators from bringing drink onto the site.
  - 13.2.2. Not allow spectators bring their own fireworks onto the site.
  - 13.2.3. Not allow anyone to cross the roped off areas.
  - 13.2.4. Ensure all exits from the site are clear at all times.
- 13.3. Fire extinguishers must be kept on hand as well as buckets of water and sand.

### 14. Before leaving the site

- 14.1. Water should be poured on the bonfire embers to ensure that they have gone out **completely** before the site is left unattended.



- 14.2. Used fireworks must be collected with the utmost care, doused with water and either buried or placed in a metal container. CHILDREN MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO COLLECT USED FIREWORKS.

**15. The morning after**

- 15.1. Carefully check and clear the site.
- 15.2. Dispose of fireworks safely. They should never be burnt in a confined space (eg a boiler).

**16. Insurance**

- 16.1. Although it is not required by health and safety law, if you are holding a public firework display, you require public liability insurance and this is provided by the NFU Mutual Insurance Scheme for YFC.
- 16.2. The NFU Mutual does apply special conditions when a YFC Club is organising a Firework Display and these conditions MUST BE APPLIED IN FULL for the insurance to remain in place. (As point 6.5 above and see page 20 of the *Concise details of YFC Insurance cover from NFU Mutual*).

**17. Further guidance**

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

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## Annex 1

### Site layout

**Figure 1a** Site layout for displays including aerial fireworks (ie including rockets, mines or Roman candles)

|                                     |                               |                              |           |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
|                                     | 25 meters                     | 50 meters                    | 25 meters |
| 50 meters                           | Fall-out area (dropping zone) |                              |           |
| 20 meters                           |                               | Firing area (50 meters wide) |           |
| 25 meters                           |                               | Safety area                  |           |
| As required to prevent overcrowding | Spectator area                |                              |           |

END  
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