

Home Firework Display Safety Factsheet

Plan your display carefully first and check how much space you have for your spectators and the fireworks you intend to let off.

Most outdoor fireworks for consumer use come under two categories GARDEN FIREWORKS and DISPLAY FIREWORKS, with different safety distances, and standards laid down for performance, projected fallout and debris covered by British Standard 7114.

Small fireworks contained in selection boxes/selection packs and sold as single fireworks will often be marked GARDEN FIREWORK or GARDEN FIREWORKS requiring a minimum spectator distance of 5 metres and are quite suitable for small and medium sized back gardens and back yards.

Medium and large sized fireworks contained in larger selection boxes/selection packs and sold as single fireworks will often be marked DISPLAY FIREWORK or DISPLAY FIREWORKS requiring a minimum spectator distance of 25 metres and are quite suitable for larger gardens and open spaces.

Some selection boxes can contain both a mix of garden and display fireworks and are marked as DISPLAY FIREWORKS.

Safety distances required are dictated by the firework's classification/projected debris/projected fallout distances/fusing and performance and should be strictly be adhered to.

With this in mind, you should only buy fireworks which are suitable for your particular size of garden - DON'T attempt to push the safety distances any less than this by buying and using display fireworks in small or medium size gardens.

Many of the larger display fireworks (especially larger display roman bouquets/barrages/cakes/mines and rockets, rockets especially those with their larger heads and metal cased motors on some of them) are NOT suitable for outdoor areas with a spectator distance of less than 25m away because of their power and size.

A display firework looks very exciting from 10 metres away for the first few seconds and then becomes frightening and perhaps dangerous as spectators get showered by burning effects and/or falling glowing or burning debris. Don't be fooled into thinking that small display fireworks are suitable and safe for use in small domestic gardens – they are NOT.

No matter how small the display fireworks you might have are and no matter how tame they might seem, the distance stated on the label MUST be observed at ALL times. Here's why; if you used less than 25 metres for display fireworks (even small ones) and something went wrong i.e. a firework exploding and tipping over and it injured somebody standing too close or damaged somebody else's property - you could be sued for holding a dangerous display.

If you have or are using a mixed selection box of garden and display fireworks then you still need a distance of 25m no matter how small the display fireworks may seem.

DON'T chance it-if you don't have the necessary 25m safety distance required to use and watch display fireworks safely, then you should NOT be trying to use display fireworks in a restricted space, stick to garden fireworks, it's that easy! A garden firework viewed from 5 metres can look just as dramatic as a display firework viewed from 25 metres.

Tip: to beef up garden fireworks, try using an old wooden table with a flat top to stand fireworks on and use a deep plant pot of soil or bucket of sand on the table to bury fireworks in and launch rockets from and nail a couple of posts to mount wheels on.

This will add a bit more impact as garden fireworks will shoot higher and look more impressive and wheels will look superb as they create showers of sparks cascading to the floor from a higher post.

Only buy fireworks marked "**Complies With BS7114 Part2 1988**" or "**Contents Comply With BS7114 Part2 1988**" from reputable retailers and mail-order suppliers, asking for advice on suitable fireworks for your particular garden (most will be happy to help) and using the advice above, only buy those which are suitable for your particular size of garden.

Do not buy illegal and dangerous fireworks such as bangers, mini-rockets, and anything not intended for use by the general public i.e. Category 4 fireworks for professional use such as aerial shells/maroons etc from street sellers/unauthorised vendors/mobile vans etc.

When you have got the fireworks home, take the time to read all the instructions printed on them and any instruction leaflets that may be provided.

On the day, rope off the spectator area at the distance required by the fireworks you are using, upwind if possible; 5m for garden fireworks/25m for display fireworks and at least 25m from both garden and display fireworks (a mixed selection box)
Push rocket tubes into the ground at the back of your fireworks area angling them away from parked cars/greenhouses/nearby property/sheds etc.
Put out a bucket of sand in the middle to bury the base of tall fireworks in.
Have a flat board to stand flat-bottomed fireworks on, make sure it is stable and level.
Put up suitable posts for wheels where they can be seen but away from where their sparks might ignite other fireworks.

Before you start, have a first aid kit and bucket of water available in case of accident. Have lighters or matches for lighting the portfires or wicks (never use matches or lighters to light the fireworks) and a torch to read instructions and help position and light fireworks.

Wear suitable personal protection while lighting the fireworks, DIY safety glasses or goggles and gloves are recommended as a minimum for lighting garden fireworks, a safety helmet with built in ear defenders and face protection and gloves and sturdy boots or shoes are better if you let off a lot of display fireworks. Don't wear flammable clothing.

Safety tip: keep trousers outside wellingtons or safety boots so that sparks and hot effects from display fireworks don't fall inside them.

DON'T smoke while getting out and handling the fireworks, or allow anyone else helping out to smoke while getting them out and handling them.

NEVER drink alcohol or allow anyone else who is helping with the fireworks to drink alcohol while handling and lighting the fireworks; it impairs yours (and their) judgement to do things safely and it could lead to sloppy safety awareness and serious accidents!

Check instructions with a torch. If a firework has any fuse cover(s) remove these, taking care not to damage the firework or it's fuse. Straighten the fuse and according to the instructions: place on flat surface, secure upright in soft ground or attach securely to an upright post. Use a portfire to light the tip of the fuse at arm's length and step well back.

NEVER allow children to let off any fireworks, no matter how much they want to.

Never go back to a firework if it doesn't go off, go onto the next one.

Check that rockets are free to rise from their tubes before you light them and are angled away from spectators/trees/buildings and other hazards.

Ensure wheels spin freely before you light them but equally make sure they are secured properly and cannot fall off or fly off!

Before lighting ensure that mines, roman candles, multishot cakes, multishot barrages, and fountains cannot tip over.

Supervise children with sparklers and make sure EVERYONE wears gloves while lighting and holding them and holds them properly at arm's length but NEVER give them to children under 5, it's also advisable to have a bucket of water handy to drop used sparklers in.

DO NOT BURN spent fireworks.

After the display (ideally next day, in daylight), go round and pick up spent firework cases wearing gloves and using tongs if you have any. Some spent fireworks and their debris could still be hot or smouldering and some fireworks may not have been ignited at all. Drop the fireworks in a bucket of water and dispose of when soaked. Do not burn them as they may still contain explosive materials and could cause injury or property damage.