



FIREWORKS AND ALCOHOL. AN EXPLOSIVE COMBINATION.

Hooligans and Fireworks

Sadly, there has always been a small but persistent hooligan element associated with the firework season. This is defined in the DTI's official injury statistics as "casual incident in the street or other public place".

A detailed analysis of the figures shows that firework hooliganism is a particular problem in certain areas. A breakdown of hooligan-related firework injuries by NHS Trust appears in the accompanying regional statistics.

Firework injuries statistics for 1998 show that 226 injuries occurred as the result of an incident in the street.

This figure actually represents a welcome 12% drop in injuries compared with 1997, but there is still work to do to try and stamp out these injuries which account for more injuries than public displays.

The direct involvement of Police Forces in the 1999 Firework Safety Campaign is specifically intended to strengthen the efforts against hooligan behaviour involving fireworks. Indeed, tool kits provided to Police Forces contain a specially designed poster to help get the message across about how a bit of so-called light-hearted fun with fireworks can end in tragedy.

Existing statistics linking fireworks to hooliganism relate in the main to the period leading up to and immediately after bonfire night.

But, during the celebrations to mark the new Millennium particularly on New Year's Eve, there is considerable potential for hooligan behaviour involving the misuse of fireworks.

The problem may well be made worse by the longer time over which alcohol is likely to be consumed at private parties, as well as at organised displays run by pubs, clubs and other organisations.

The 60,000 pubs in England and Wales will be able to choose when they open and close during the 36-hour period from 11am on 31st December until evening closing time on 1st January. This experiment for the Millennium celebrations does not apply in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

It is a criminal offence to let fireworks off in a public place - which includes the street, park, bus station, schoolyard, playing fields, car parks, village green or, indeed anywhere other than in your own back garden or on private property. The maximum penalty on conviction is a £5,000 fine.

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