



FIREWORKS AND ALCOHOL. AN EXPLOSIVE COMBINATION.

Fireworks and the Millennium

It is expected that fireworks will play a considerable part in celebrations to mark the Millennium. This, together with the anticipated amount of alcohol that is likely to be consumed in the run-up to midnight on New Year's Eve, could, if not managed carefully, be an explosive mix. The potential for accidents and injuries is considerable.

The main focus of the DTI's 1999 firework safety campaign is alcohol and fireworks, and whilst the messages are valid for November 5th events, they are even more relevant at fireworks parties and celebrations organised to welcome the Millennium.

The messages are aimed at those organising private parties in their back garden, to organisers of public displays at pubs, clubs and other places, as well as to individuals attending town and city centre celebrations where thousands of people might gather.

Millennium Fireworks

Some companies have designed special fireworks for Millennium celebrations. These include single ignition multi-shot 'cakes' (Roman Candles with some 140 tubes). The advantage of these fireworks is that they only require to be lit once and they can provide a multi-effect display with a finale effect to usher in the New Year. These devices cost around £70 and can provide a substitute for the usual type of fireworks each of which requires to be set-up and lit separately.

Selling period

For the Millennium

Following discussions with the DTI, the British Pyrotechnists' Association has agreed that it will advise retailers that supplies of fireworks can be displayed for sale from December 27th thus ensuring that fireworks are not available in the run up to Christmas.

Storage

The legislation relating to the storage of fireworks applies equally to the Millennium period as it does to the lead up to November 5th.

It is an offence to keep fireworks (except those for private use) on premises which have not been registered or licensed for that purpose. Details of retailers' responsibilities are contained in the fact sheet in the tool kit (which can be freely copied).

Organisers of private events should arrange for fireworks to be delivered and stored securely. Reputable companies will supply information and advice.

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Legislation

The Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1997 and the Explosives Act 1875 (as amended) apply to Millennium events and to November 5th.

The 1999 tool kit also contains a fact sheet: "Fireworks and the Law," which could be made available to retailers and event organisers in the run up to the Millennium. (Again, the fact sheet has been designed with local copying in mind.)

Public Place

It is an offence to throw or discharge a firework in a street or public place.

In general terms, 'public place' includes any land which is not in private ownership and could include greens, car parks, precincts, paved areas, town centres, parks etc.

Hooligans

In 1998, research figures showed that a 12% drop in hooligan injuries was achieved over the bonfire night period. We hope to see a further reduction during the same period in 1999.

During celebrations associated with the new Millennium, and particularly on New Year's Eve, it is anticipated that additional hooligan problems might occur.

The gathering together of crowds of people in celebratory mood, often under the influence of alcohol, could increase the potential for rowdy behaviour and for firework injuries.

Tool kits provided to Police Forces contain a special fact sheet relating to hooliganism and fireworks, as well as a specially designed poster to help get the message across about how a bit of so-called lighthearted fun with fireworks can end in tragedy.

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