

Fireworks to Buy

If you are looking for fireworks to buy then hopefully the information here will help you decide exactly what you want. With so many different types of fireworks and so many different brands it can be confusing trying to choose which fireworks are suitable for your display. Below is a breakdown of the laws of purchasing fireworks, different categories of fireworks, different types of fireworks and some information about professional fireworks displays. This should give you a clearer idea of what you need when trying to construct the perfect fireworks display for your event.

Legal age to buy fireworks

Please remember that to buy fireworks you must be 18 years of age or older. It is illegal to buy and take delivery of fireworks or be in possession of fireworks in a public place if you are under the age of 18. It is also an offence to purchase fireworks for anybody under the age of 18. If you look under the age of 21 it is industry standard to request proof of age by photo I.D.

Buying Garden Fireworks – What are garden fireworks?

Fireworks on sale to the general public currently come under two classifications, Garden and Display fireworks. Display fireworks have a safety distance of at least 25m. This makes them unsuitable for small garden displays. Garden class fireworks are those which have a spectator distance of at least 5m or 8m for fireworks classified under the new EU/EN standards. These are suitable for small garden displays and younger children.

Please do not ignore the safety distance; it is there for a reason! Be aware of the implications of ignoring this safety distance. If anything goes wrong, you could be deemed to have used the firework irresponsibly (or illegally) and it could mean you are not covered in insurance purposes.

Different types of fireworks

If you are looking to construct and fire your own display then do a little homework and find out what the main firework types are. Below is a list of the main types of fireworks that would be suitable for a garden display or DIY display:

- **Selection Boxes & Sparklers**

Selection Boxes contain an assortment of all the different types of fireworks. The idea is to provide as many fireworks as possible for a reasonable price. Whilst this sounds good in theory, in reality most boxes contain smaller items than you would pick individually, with the emphasis being on quantity rather than quality and performance

- **Shot Cakes & Roman Candles**

Cakes are one of the most common fireworks used in fireworks displays today. These are packed with a number of tubes containing various shots of colours and effects. Once the cake or candle is lit, the fuse burns from tube to tube (igniting each shot in turn) releasing it into the air where it explodes with an effect. Cakes are designed to be set up on the ground, although their effects might be aerial and the main body of the cake remains stationary while it fires

- **Rockets**

Rockets vary in size and shape and have a wide range of different effects. In recent years, some rockets have become available with double, triple and even quadruple effects. The majority of rockets contain a 'display effect' - something pretty or colourful accompanied by other sounds such as whistles and crackles. Some rockets have a pretty tail when they take off and pretty much most rockets bang

- **Fountains & Mines**

All fountains create a column of colourful sparks from ground level and most tend to be quiet except for some which have a crackling effect. Many fountains are multi-effect and resemble cylinders, cakes or other shapes. Fountains and mines contain a number of tubes, each with a different effect packed into it, and they burn from one tube to another ejecting a spray effect which can reach up to a height of 10 metres

- **Catherine Wheels**

A wheel is a card or plastic disc with a number of rocket-like thrusters that burn to provide both sparks and thrust, spinning the wheel around to create a vigorous effect of colour

- **Lanterns**

Lanterns are not strictly a firework in terms of their classification but have become a favourite when it comes to fireworks displays and celebrations. They produce an effect unlike any firework and thanks to their beauty and lack of noise they add a different dimension to a fireworks display. They can literally float for miles and are best used in groups because they form a chain of lights that look amazing when released in numbers

Buying Professional Firework Displays

If you decide that a professional display is what you require then you won't get involved at any point with actually buying or handling the fireworks. You should look for a firework company that offers professional or operator-fired displays as a service.

Many fireworks companies offer both retail and professional fireworks, some even have their own retail shops too. However there are many companies that specialise only in professional displays and these tend to have the best quality displays. These specialists often don't have a physical office because they are based in licensed explosives stores and for legal and safety reasons these are not open to the public. So this is one industry where lack of physical premises should not put you off.

Things to look for with a professional display company:

- They must have public liability insurance as standard. £1million as a minimum is perfectly adequate although £5million is becoming the typical level with some companies increasing up to £10million. Firework companies insurance is not necessarily an indication of the quality of service. You should ask to see proof of their insurance and also check that it is current. A certified company will be more than happy to show you a copy of their cover or a covering letter from their insurance company. Don't be afraid to call a company's insurers to check the policy is genuine and never employ a fireworks company who is not fully insured

- Ask about staff training. Although it is not a legal requirement it would be reassuring to know the level of their experience. It is generally accepted in the business that operators should be trained to a minimum standard. There are several training courses available within the industry - 'BPA Level 1' and 'BPA Level 2'. This BPA (British Pyrotechnists Association) course instructs operators in the minimum skills expected when firing a professional show with the more advanced "BPA Level 2" course covering more in-depth skills. Another course used within the industry is the Illuminate Consult course. It is also typical that firework display should be controlled by at least two operators in case of an accident
- Don't be afraid to ask about the company's safety record

Many of the larger companies are members of an organisation called the BPA and will usually advertise this fact. They pay to become members and the BPA acts in the interests of the fireworks trade and its members so you can be reassured your display is being carried out by professionals. It should be noted that there is no legal requirement for a display company to be in the BPA and a non-member will not necessarily provide any less safe or less quality display than a member.

Professional displays are often priced on the basis of duration however this has no bearing whatsoever on the quality of the fireworks. It is perfectly possible for two displays to last for 10 minutes but one has a lot less fireworks and quality of fireworks than the other has. So with that in mind be cautious of any displays sold to you solely on the basis they offer more duration for a given budget than a competitor.

Professional displays usually start from around £500 but with increasing insurance and material costs £800-£1000 is becoming more of a recognised quote for a standard display. Remember, higher costs are reflective of the company investing in insurance, staff training and better products. If you seek to cut costs with a professional display you could end up picking a company with insufficient insurance or compromise on the quality of your fireworks display.

For a high quality, intense display with a wow factor, budget for around £100 per minute. So for a good 10 minute show expect to pay in the region of £1000. For an even better show, you could fire the same budget in less time. Sometimes it is best to have a 'short and sharp' display rather than a 'slow and longwinded' one!