

Retailer's Guide to Selling Fireworks

If you sell fireworks you have certain obligations to the public and your staff.

- You must be 'registered' or obtain a 'licence' to store fireworks
- You must obtain a 'licence to sell fireworks' if you intend to supply (sell) outside the usual fireworks period
- Store fireworks safely
- Don't sell to under 18s
- Know your fire drill

The Fireworks Regulations 2004 require that you must display a sign where fireworks are supplied or exposed for supply, stating that it is illegal:

- To sell adult fireworks or sparklers to anyone under 18
 - For anyone under 18 to possess adult fireworks (any fireworks except for caps, cracker snaps, indoor fireworks, novelty matches, party poppers, sparklers, serpents and throwdowns) in a public place
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FAQ's

This guide offers helpful advice but for more information contact your local Trading Standards Department or Fire Service.

Q: Do I need a licence or registration to store fireworks?

A: In almost all cases, yes. Depending on your location you will need to apply to either the Trading Standards Department or to the Fire Service.

Q: Are there different categories of fireworks?

A: Yes. There are four categories of fireworks. The Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2010 specify those which may be supplied to the general public. All other fireworks may only be supplied to a restricted range of persons and organisations which are specified in the 2010 Regulations.

The following information only applies to the retail sale of fireworks.

Q: When can I sell fireworks?

A: The periods where selling fireworks without a sales licence is permitted are: Guy Fawkes, from 15th October and ending on 10th November; New Year, from 26th December and ending on the 31st December; Chinese New Year, the first day and the three days immediately preceding it; and on the day of Diwali and the three days immediately preceding it.

Q: How should I sell fireworks?

A: Fireworks should be sold in manufacturers' packed sets. The contents of these must not be taken out of their packs and sold separately. Only some sparklers and some larger individual devices may be sold unpacked.

Q: How should fireworks be stored and displayed?

A: A leaflet giving information about storing and selling fireworks safely may be viewed and downloaded free of charge at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg407.pdf.

The key points within this document are:

- exclude sources of ignition
- stop people smoking anywhere near fireworks
- keep fireworks away from space heaters
- avoid handling of fireworks unnecessarily
- keep fireworks in closed transport packaging
- don't decant fireworks into metal dustbins
- don't store fireworks near articles that could easily catch fire leading to the fire spreading to the fireworks
- don't store fireworks near other articles that could spread the fire
- don't store with flammable items such as white spirit or nylon tights and stockings
- don't store near pallets, cardboard boxes and paper
- don't store near parked vehicles
- ensure that all fireworks in the shop sales area are kept in a suitable display or storage cabinet
- ensure all escape routes and fire exits are clear and fire exit doors unlocked
- don't store or display anywhere near an escape route or fire exit
- don't store an excessive amount either in the shop or in the stockroom
- don't store more than you are allowed to store under your licence or registration

Please note you must take special precautions if you share a building with flats or maisonettes. Please contact your Local Authority or Fire Service for more information. Your firework supplier is also a useful source of information and advice.

Q: Is there anything else I need to know about the acquisition and supply of fireworks?

A: Before you can supply or transfer more than 50 kg net of fireworks to someone, that person must show you a valid registration or licence. Licensing authorities may request to see information about firework transactions exceeding 50kg net explosive content in particular - the date that the fireworks were supplied, the date that the supplier supplied to another person, or proposed to supply and the total weight.

Q: What special fire precautions are needed?

A: Your premises should already meet various fire regulations so what follows is extra advice for the period while you are selling fireworks and is not a complete statement of your obligations.

- Don't store fireworks in passageways or under stairs and keep these clear at all times. Don't obstruct any doors
- Keep water-type fire extinguishers handy and make sure they are properly maintained. Buckets of water or sand are useful as a standby
- Make sure you (and any staff) know how to call the Fire Service quickly. Have a display notice that tells everyone what to do if there is a fire
- If someone suspects a fire, get everyone out of your shop and call the Fire Service immediately. As soon as the Fire Officer arrives, tell him or her that fireworks are involved and explain where and how the fireworks are stored

Q: How can I encourage the safe use of fireworks?

A: As a responsible retailer, you should provide display safety leaflets featuring the Firework Code (available from BIS, Trading Standards Departments and manufacturers free of charge) alongside the fireworks, ensuring your customers get essential safety advice. Watch the age limit for buying fireworks. Don't sell to anyone under 18 as anti-social behaviour with fireworks can be a problem.