

Bonfire safety

Guy Fawkes Night is a time of excitement for children and adults alike, and a time when many sports clubs host organised firework and bonfire displays. However, whilst such events represent an opportunity to engage with the wider community, and to raise funds, they also pose significant health and safety risks.

Minimising those risks, to ensure a fun and safe time is had by all, comes down to taking sensible precautions. First of all, be sure to inform the Fire Brigade and Police of your plans and prepare a drill for calling out the emergency services, should they be required.

Planning for crowd control and crowd safety is vitally important too. Choose a site with as many entrances and exits as possible - ensure all are clearly signposted, free from obstructions and well-lit. Put in place measures designed to keep spectators at a safe distance, at least 25m from a firework display

You should also arrange for properly trained stewards to be present - at least one per 250 spectators and a minimum of two. Ensure they are clearly visible, for instance, wearing fluorescent jackets and have practiced emergency procedures prior to the event.

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Other simple actions you may wish to consider:

- Carry out a thorough risk assessment to identify hazards to staff, volunteers, spectators and others involved or attending the event.
- Make sure adequate first-aid facilities can be provided, and give the emergency services details of emergency vehicle access sites.
- Put in place plans to control entrances (preferably via a ticketing system), insisting children under 18 are accompanied by an adult.
- Ensure the bonfire is a manageable size and built at least 15m clear of buildings, pylons, trees and long grass.
- Never use accelerant to light the fire and ensure a water supply is easily available.
- At the end of the evening, the responsible adult should make sure that the bonfire is safe by raking over the embers and damping them down.
- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114 - this is the British Standard that all fireworks should meet. Even then, ensure they are inspected prior to use and, ideally, engage a specialist contractor to manage the display.
- Qualified first-aiders with suitable equipment should attend all organised bonfires and firework displays.



Kick the risk

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Before you go ahead with a planned bonfire night display, it is important to consider any risks it might pose to the surrounding area, as well as those on-site. For instance, take wind direction and nearby buildings and roads into account when making a final decision on your venue.

Clearly the full list of preventative measures is more detailed but these easy low-cost tactics will go some way to reducing the risk associated with holding a bonfire night display at your club.

Perhaps the most important action of all is to consult an insurance expert for assistance. Bluefin Sport have a range of experts that can help you understand and manage risk



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email **sport@bluefinsport.co.uk**
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