

25th October 2013

IAEM issues seasonal advice on the safe use of Fireworks

Mindful of the historical use of fireworks during Hallowe'en celebrations, the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine has issued advice about safer handling of fireworks. The Association is keen to see a reduction in the number of fireworks-related injuries which occur at this time of year. Although fireworks are very rarely associated with deaths in Ireland, much more commonly they cause burns and blast injuries to the upper limb (typically the fingers and hands) as well as the eyes. Unfortunately the majority of such injuries leave permanent disfigurement and/or disability and the majority of victims are children and young adults.

Although fireworks are never perfectly safe, their safety can be improved if they are used properly. Following the simple measures listed below will ensure that your firework display is enjoyable and safe.

- Adults should ensure that children are kept away from fireworks;
- Sparklers can get up to five times hotter than cooking oil and they should never be given to a child under five, even under supervision;
- Certain fireworks can only be used by firework professionals. These include air bombs, aerial shells, aerial maroons, shells-in-mortar and maroons-in-mortar, all bangers, mini rockets and fireworks with erratic flight;
- One person should be in charge of fireworks. This person should remain vigilant until the last firework has been safely discharged. Read the instructions in daylight and don't drink any alcohol until all have been discharged;
- Make your preparations in advance and in daylight or with a torch (never a naked flame);
- You should also take precautions to protect your pets during times when fireworks are likely to be set off;
- On the night, you will need:
 - a torch;
 - a bucket or two of water;
 - eye protection and gloves;
 - a bucket of soft earth to put fireworks in;

- suitable supports and launchers if you're setting off Catherine wheels or rockets.

For anyone organising a professional firework display the [Guidance document on Organised Pyrotechnic Displays](#) available from the Department of Justice is important reading. There is also a general advice document on fireworks available on the Department's website entitled [General Guidance - Fireworks in Ireland](#).

It should be everyone's goal to have a safe and happy Hallowe'en. The prevention of unnecessary injury and suffering from firework injuries can be achieved by implementation of these simple rules.