

9th October 2008

IAEM issues advice on the safe use of Fireworks

Today's news (<http://www.rte.ie/news/2008/1009/fireworks.html>) that a 14 year old boy has received serious burns following an incident involving fireworks and the historical use of fireworks during Hallowe'en celebrations have prompted the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) to issue advice about safer handling of fireworks. This advice is based on our professional experience of treating firework-related injuries of all degrees of severity and on international research. We hope that this intervention will result in fewer patients suffering the devastating long-term consequences of incidents with fireworks which have been associated with occasional deaths. However, they much more frequently cause burns and blast injuries to the upper limb (mainly to the fingers and hand) and the eyes. The majority of such injuries leave permanent disfigurement and/or disability.

Our Advice

More children than adults get hurt by fireworks. Fireworks-related burns and injuries increase around Halloween.

Part 6 of the [Criminal Justice Act 2006](#) amended the Explosives Act 1875 to make it illegal to possess and ignite an unlicensed firework, to propel or throw an ignited firework or to sell or supply an unlicensed firework to a third party. The law defines fireworks as *all those devices which burn and explode to give a loud noise and a visual effect* – basically a typical, traditional firework. Bangers are now defined as fireworks.

Fireworks are safe **if you use them properly** and following some simple measures 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
- Some fireworks can only be used by firework professionals. These include air bombs, aerial shells, aerial maroons, shells-in-mortar, maroons-in-mortar etc.
- A single adult should be in charge of the fireworks. This person should remain vigilant until the last firework has been safely discharged. Read the

President:

Mr Fergal Hickey FRCS, FRCSEd.(A&E), DA(UK), FCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

Sligo General Hospital
The Mall
Sligo
Ireland

Tel no: +353 71 9174505
Fax no: +353 71 9174646

Secretary:

Mr James Binchy FRCSEd.(A&E), Dip.Med.Tox., FCEM.
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

University College Hospital,
Newcastle Road
Galway
Ireland

Tel no: +353 91 542766
Fax no: +353 91 520154

Treasurer:

Dr Una Geary FRCSEd.(A&E), FRCPI, FCEM
Consultant in Emergency Medicine

St James's Hospital
James's St,
Dublin 8
Ireland

Tel no: +353 1 4103581 / 4162777
Fax no: +353 1 4103451

- instructions in daylight and don't drink any alcohol until they've all been discharged.
- Make your preparations in advance, and in daylight or with a torch (never a naked flame).
 - 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.
 - You should take precautions to protect your pets during the times of the year when fireworks are likely to be set off.

Firework displays

If you are organising a firework display for the general public, read the [Guidance Document on Organised Pyrotechnic Displays](#) available from the Department of Environment and Local Government.