

21st October 2010

IAEM issues advice on the safe use of Fireworks

The historical use of fireworks during Hallowe'en celebrations has prompted the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) to issue advice about safer handling of fireworks. This advice is based both on our professional experience of treating firework-related injuries of all degrees of severity in the country's Emergency Departments and on international research.

Fireworks have been associated with very occasional deaths but much more commonly cause burns and blast injuries to the upper limb (mainly to the fingers and hand) and to the eyes. The majority of such injuries leave permanent disfigurement and/or disability. More children than adults get hurt by fireworks and fireworks-related injuries increase at the time around Halloween.

Our Advice

Fireworks are generally safe **if you use them properly**. 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 and maroons-in-mortar, all bangers, mini rockets and fireworks with erratic flight.
- Only 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).
- 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.

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- You should also 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.

A safe and happy Hallowe'en should be everyone's goal! Prevention of unnecessary injury and suffering from fireworks' injuries can be avoided by implementing the recommendations of the Association and its members.