

BPA THE HISTORY.

The British Pyrotechnist Association (BPA) was founded in 1976, by Mr Chamberlin the father of Micheal Chamberlin, in Leicestershire. Regular meetings took place either in the Leicestershire area or at The Great Northern Hotel in London.

The BPA as it is better known, was born because of the pressure to ban fireworks especially following a TV documentary showing firework injuries. The companies who were initially involved in its formation included Standard Fireworks, Brocks, and Astra. Their main aim was to address the issues raised in relation to consumer fireworks, and to support the introduction of BS 7114 which was being prepared and widely welcomed particularly standardising labelling and proper fuses (replacing touch paper).

While the BS7114 pushed to improve the safety and issues surrounding Consumer fireworks, at this time the British Standards Institution considered it too difficult to address the issues on Category 4 fireworks. Even back then there was pressure to stop the sale and supply of consumer fireworks in preference for professional firework displays! In a bid to improve safety there became a necessity for professional display companies to be involved.

The BPA now involved a range of companies and people, these included Rev Lancaster (Kimbolton), John Deeker (Pains), Ian Craig (Phoenix), along with John Woodhead, Mel Baker, and Martin Guest (Standard Brocks). Their combined aim was to protect and ensure the survival of the fireworks industry. During this time, the likes of John Woodhouse and Mel Baker were members who became chair of the BPA and guided it against external pressures.

In 1999 CarnDu Ltd headed by Tom Smith, and supported by Avril DiPalma, became the secretariat of the BPA, and continue to do so until this very day. With the BPA celebrating its 50th Year in 2026 they have been among the longest people actively involved in this organisation. For its members they offer a vast knowledge on legislation and Health and Safety issues.

Tom was involved with the BPA before 1991 and represented the BPA at meetings with BSI and HSE. Tom also singlehandedly developed the packaging box matrix, and with Martin Guest the original default classification regime.

Over time the Consumer side of the BPA decided to move away and form its only Organisation the British Fireworks Association. (BFA) This was down to changing views and objectives. This was more apparent following the introduction of the BS7114. Both organisations aim was and continue to be to protect the use and supply of fireworks.

Throughout the years the BPA has been instrumental in advocating for greater awareness through educational campaigns aimed at both the public and governments. Our organisation encourages innovation within the industry, supporting efforts in research and development to improve the performance, safety, and environmental impact of fireworks, particularly in terms of noise pollution and chemical emissions.

BPA membership benefits not only from having a collective voice for the fireworks industry it brings together companies from across the UK, creating opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices. Members can network and keep up with the latest trends in firework technology and safety.

The BPA keeps its members updated on relevant topics including transportation, handling, and storage. Being a BPA member also enhances a company's reputation, as we are recognised as one of the UK's leading authorities on pyrotechnics, membership of which, indicates that a company adheres to the highest standards of safety, professionalism, and quality. This is particularly valuable when competing for public or corporate display contracts where trust and compliance with safety regulations are key.

Being a BPA member means assistance to navigate the challenges of the modern fireworks industry is always at hand. The BPA is rightly proud of its training and certification accreditation from City & Guilds and members enjoy discounted access to these and other specialised training programs, which are crucial for operating within the UK's regulatory framework. Programs which cover areas such as fireworks transportation, display safety, risk assessments, and the technical knowledge needed to safely manage and use fireworks.

Certification through the BPA provides credibility and trustworthiness to a company's operation something that is essential in today's market.

Recently the BPA has introduced a Corporate Partners scheme open to companies that service our industry in some compacity, whilst still in its infancy, it is already starting to show benefits for our members.

The BPA Today

The British Pyrotechnist Association (BPA) is working hard to provide an organisation for all display companies, large or small and recognises that in the past it has been perceived as elitist and tailored toward larger, long-established companies. Today's organisation however is fervently committed to inclusivity and changing that perception.

The BPA now invites all firework and pyrotechnic display companies to join our growing community. Whether you are a small, local display company looking to expand your expertise or a larger, well-established business, we believe everyone in the fireworks industry has valuable perspectives and contributions to make. Our goal is to foster a diverse and innovative environment that reflects the true vibrancy of the UK's pyrotechnic scene. In doing this the BPA wants to help challenge the old image and demonstrate that it is genuinely committed to change.

The BPA has joined with the BFA in fighting the proposed firework bill, something that, if successful, will benefit the whole industry! In future I am sure that we will face further challenges and to meet these we need to be stronger. A larger Membership will not only create benefits by attracting more Corporate Partners but show that we really do represent the whole display industry! This is doubly important when it comes to dealing with Government Departments and influencing any proposed legislation. Together we can be stronger!

Derek Hayes
Chair of BPA

