

Guidance Sheet

**FIREWORK DISPLAYS IN HOT, DRY
WEATHER**

GUIDE NO 7

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EVENT ORGANISER GUIDANCE

FIREWORK DISPLAYS IN HOT, DRY WEATHER

Understanding professional planning, controls and decision-making

The essential points

Prolonged dry weather increases the likelihood that a spark, burning fragment or hot debris could ignite vegetation. It does not mean that every professional display must automatically be cancelled. It means the display requires a specific, current assessment of the risks by competent professionals—and it must not proceed if the risks cannot be reduced to an acceptable level.

Why appointing a BPA member matters

A professional firework display is not simply a larger version of a private garden display. BPA member companies work within a professional framework and bring specialist knowledge of fireworks, site layout, fallout, weather, firing methods and emergency arrangements. They will consider the display as a whole, not just whether the fireworks can be lit.

During dry weather, the operator's role becomes particularly important. Conditions can vary greatly between sites and may even change during the day. The correct decision must therefore be based on the actual venue, surrounding land, prevailing and forecast weather, the proposed firework selection and the controls that can realistically be maintained at the time of the display.

What a professional operator will assess

- **Site and surroundings.** Dry grass, crops, woodland, heath, peat, hedges, thatched buildings, timber structures and other combustible materials in and beyond the venue.
- **Wind and fallout.** Wind direction, speed and gusts; the likely fallout area; nearby roads, property, livestock and land outside the organiser's control.
- **Firework selection.** Whether the proposed effects, heights, debris characteristics and firing positions remain appropriate, or whether the display should be reduced or redesigned.
- **Ground conditions.** The state of the firing site and fallout area, including cut or loose vegetation and whether suitable ground preparation is possible.
- **Fire response.** Suitable extinguishing resources, trained personnel, communications, emergency access, surveillance and the ability to respond immediately to an incipient fire.
- **Changing conditions.** Weather warnings, local restrictions, advice from the landowner, local authority or fire and rescue service, and conditions observed during set-up and immediately before firing.

Controls that may be considered

Depending on the site and risk assessment, the professional operator may recommend one or more of the following:

- changing the firing position, spectator layout or orientation of the display;
- increasing separation and control of the fallout area;
- removing loose cuttings and other readily combustible material where this can be done safely and lawfully;
- wetting appropriate areas where this is practical, effective and permitted, while recognising that superficial wetting is not a substitute for safe separation or sound judgement;
- using different products or effects, reducing the scale or duration, or omitting particular items;
- providing additional water, suitable firefighting equipment, trained fire-watch personnel and post-display monitoring;
- ensuring the local Fire Authorities are aware of the event, its location and timing and have established routes to the display site and surrounding areas. They may even wish to station a fire appliance on site;
- liaising with the landowner, venue, local authority, emergency services or Safety Advisory Group as appropriate; or
- ultimately postponing or cancelling the display if adequate control cannot be achieved.

What the event organiser must do

The event organiser retains responsibility for the wider event and must work openly with the display company. Appointing a professional operator is a major control measure, but it does not remove the organiser's own duties or the need for cooperation.

- **Engage early.** Tell the operator about the venue, neighbouring land, access limitations, water supplies, crops, animals, structures and any previous fire concerns.
- **Provide authority and access.** Ensure the operator can inspect all relevant areas, including the intended fallout area, and can speak with the landowner or site manager.
- **Share current information.** Pass on local warnings, restrictions, licence conditions and advice received from the local authority, fire and rescue service or Safety Advisory Group.
- **Resource the controls.** Agree who will provide water, equipment, stewards, fire-watch personnel, communications and post-display patrols. Record responsibilities clearly. In general these **MUST** be the responsibility of the organizer – the firework display crew is there to rig, fire and de-rig the display;
- **Protect the safety decision.** Do not press the operator to proceed because tickets have been sold, guests are waiting or cancellation would be costly. Commercial pressure must never determine whether firing is safe. It is **NEVER** the case that “the show must go on”;
- **Review the event plan.** Update the event and fire risk assessments, emergency plan, communications plan and cancellation arrangements to reflect the dry-weather risk.

A professional may still say “no”

A BPA member may conclude that the display should be changed, postponed or cancelled—even at short notice. This is evidence of responsible professional judgement, not a failure of planning. Conditions at the venue, wind direction, local wildfire risk or the effectiveness of available controls may make firing unacceptable.

Questions organisers should ask

- Has the display company completed a site-specific assessment that addresses the current dry conditions?
- What areas could receive burning debris or fallout, including land beyond the venue boundary?
- What changes will trigger a redesign, delay, postponement or cancellation?
- Who has authority to stop the display, and how will that decision be communicated?
- What firefighting equipment and trained personnel will be in place, and is emergency access kept clear?
- How long will the site and fallout area be monitored after the display, and who will complete the final check?

On the day: a shared decision

The risk assessment should be treated as a live document. The organiser and operator should review the actual conditions before set-up and again before firing. If there is a significant change—particularly in wind, ground conditions, local wildfire activity or available controls—the assessment and plan should be revised. Where doubt remains, the safe decision is to delay, modify or not fire.

If a fire starts

Raise the alarm, call 999, implement the event emergency plan and follow the instructions of the fire and rescue service. Staff should only attempt first-aid firefighting where they are trained, have suitable equipment, have a safe escape route and can do so without placing themselves or others at risk.

Further guidance

Professional displays: Use the EIG publication *Working Together on Firework Displays* and any relevant BPA guidance and codes of practice.

Event and fire safety: Consult the event's competent fire-safety adviser, local authority/Safety Advisory Group, landowner and local fire and rescue service where appropriate. Follow any prohibition, restriction or site-specific instruction.

Important: This sheet provides general guidance for event organisers. It does not replace a suitable and sufficient site-specific risk assessment, the manufacturer's instructions, professional advice, applicable law, licence conditions or directions from an enforcing authority or emergency service.

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