



# Practicle Guide



# Bonfire Safety

[www.myfireshop.com](http://www.myfireshop.com)



## Bonfire Safety

As the days shorten and the nights draw in, many of you will be looking forward to the first of the winter festivals and celebrations. Two of these occurring around the same time of year are Bonfire Night and Diwali.

What both of these have in common is the use of plenty of bonfires and fireworks. Although bonfires and fireworks are great fun and something to be enjoyed, there is the potential for danger and things going spectacularly wrong.

Festivals and celebrations are a joyful time for most communities, bringing family and friends together. Unfortunately, this means it can also be a time of year when the celebrating community is more likely to be distracted and less aware of risks, such as fire.

If you are having a bonfire, whether it's to get rid of garden waste or part of a celebration take care. Follow the simple tips below to make sure you, and others, are safe.

### Building a bonfire

Fire can spread easily, so where and how you build your bonfire is important:

- build the bonfire in an open area 18 metres away from houses, sheds, fences overhead cables and trees
- check there are no cables, like telephone wires, above the bonfire
- don't build on council land, the bonfire will be removed
- don't build the bonfire too big, no more than 3 metres in height and make sure the stack is stable and won't collapse outwards or to one side
- keep spectators at least 25 metres back from the bonfire
- use only dry material – damp material will cause more smoke, which could annoy your neighbours or be harmful to people with breathing difficulties
- don't burn aerosols, tyres, canisters or anything containing foam or paint – many produce toxic fumes and some containers may explode causing injury
- remove any rubbish from the area around the bonfire so no one is tempted to throw something on to the fire

- check the bonfire before lighting it – piles of garden waste are sometimes used as a refuge by hibernating wildlife, or even a child could be hiding!
- use firelighters to ignite the bonfire, don't use petrol, diesel, paraffin or any other form of accelerant to get the fire going – it may get out of control quickly
- never leave the bonfire unattended
- inform all neighbours of the bonfire beforehand they are less likely to complain
- light the bonfire at times least likely to affect your neighbours
- avoid lighting a bonfire when air pollution is high in your area – check the weather forecast, or the Air Quality website
- extinguish the embers at the end of the bonfire

## **Bonfires and the Law**

There aren't any specific laws against having a bonfire, or when you can have one - but there are several laws that deal with the nuisance bonfires can cause.

Local councils can act if you, or others, burn dangerous materials or regularly have bonfires. If you are going to have a bonfire, warn your neighbours beforehand and follow these guidelines to avoid causing a nuisance to others.

## **Burning domestic waste**

It is an offence to get rid of domestic waste in a way likely to cause pollution or harm to human health, including burning it.

Burning plastic, rubber or painted materials creates poisonous fumes. These can have damaging health effects – particularly for people with existing health problems, like asthmatics and people with heart conditions.

This is covered under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

## **Danger to traffic caused by smoke**

Under the Highways Act 1980, anyone lighting a fire and allowing smoke to drift across a road faces a fine if it endangers traffic. If this happens, call the police.

## **Organising a large bonfire event**

If you are planning on organizing a large bonfire event all of the above safety tips do apply, however further tips and precautions must be considered.

## **Contact**

- The Fire and Rescue Service in your area
- Inform the Police
- Inform Local Council ( Environmental Health Services)
- Appropriate first aid organisation

## Stewards

Provide stewards for car parking duties, safety around the bonfire at least one steward for every 250 people, if you can provide more the better. Don't forget their job will not be over until the bonfire is over and the site is made safe. If possible provide them with fluorescent bibs or jackets to make them easily identifiable when carrying out their duties.

### Duties may include

- Acting as car park attendants
- Providing information
- Monitoring the bonfire area
- Keeping spectators behind barriers
- Ensuring nothing is thrown onto the fire
- Managing the public especially if alcohol is allowed
- Calling and liaising with the emergency services
- Collecting rubbish
- Clearing up after the bonfire
- Seeing that the bonfire is extinguished
- Stewards should be over 18 years of age and readily identifiable by wearing a fluorescent jacket.
- There should be sufficient artificial lighting provided at all entrances and exits so that people can arrive and leave safely. All stewards should also have a torch

### Access and means of escape

The site should have a suitable entrance or entrances for emergency vehicles and should be kept clear of all obstructions at all times. Emergency vehicles attending should be met by the person in charge of safety or the senior steward.

### Fire fighting equipment

There must be adequate fire fighting equipment to hand consisting of some or all of the following depending on the advice of the Fire and Rescue Service

- Two 9 litre water fire extinguishers
- A hose ( where mains water is available)
- Buckets of water or sand
- Fire beaters
- Fire blanket