businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Fireworks: storage and supply

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for Scotland

If you intend to supply fireworks, you must consider whether you need a storage licence and/or an all-year supply licence. Both are provided by your local authority.

In the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015, to 'supply' means to "make available on the market". In practice, this includes all sales, whether from one business to another or from a business to a consumer. Fireworks and other pyrotechnics are also 'supplied' if they are given free of charge.

This guide is not intended for businesses that specialise in fireworks and sell to those putting on professional displays. These types of businesses will likely be dealing in more dangerous fireworks and should contact their local authority if they need advice.

Firework categories

Fireworks are categorised in two different ways, one for storage licensing (HT1 to HT4) and one for supply (F1 to F4).

The F1 to F4 categories are marked on individual fireworks. The HT1 to HT4 categories only appear on the documentation that accompanies the fireworks from wholesaler to retailer; therefore, it is of vital importance that you hold on to this documentation.

There are two other categories applicable to fireworks (one that applies to all explosives and another covering the warning system for the international transport of explosives). They are covered briefly below, but they are not relevant to our guidance.

Storage licensing categories

For the purposes of storage licensing, fireworks are divided into four hazard types: HT1, HT2, HT3 and HT4. HT1 is the most dangerous type.

HT1 and HT2 are not suitable for retail storage. Most fireworks that can be supplied to consumers contain HT4 explosives, but some are designated as HT3, usually because they are more dangerous.

HT4 fireworks are suitable for retail supply; they are categorised for supply using a system that is explained below. HT3 fireworks are normally only available from specialist online fireworks suppliers or those with premises that specialise in the supply of fireworks to the public.

Supply categories

Only categories F1, F2 and F3 can be supplied to the public. Category F4 can only be supplied to persons with specialist fireworks knowledge.

F1 fireworks present a very low hazard, and are intended for use in confined areas, including fireworks that are intended for use inside domestic buildings. They have a negligible noise level.

F2 fireworks present a low hazard, and are intended for outdoor use in confined areas. They have a negligible noise level.

F3 fireworks present a medium hazard, and are intended for outdoor use in large open areas. They have a noise level that is not harmful to human health.

F4 fireworks present a high hazard, and are intended for use only by persons with specialist knowledge. They have a noise level that is not harmful to human health. They are only stocked by specialist fireworks suppliers.

Other explosives categories

There are two other categorisation systems that apply to fireworks. They apply to all explosives, and are

not so important for retail sale as the 'F' and 'HT' categories; they are therefore not covered in detail in this guide.

The first numbering system is a default system for all explosives. Within that system, all fireworks fall within numbers 0333 to 0337.

Secondly, there is the warning system for the international transport of explosives. All explosives fall into one of the hazard divisions 1.1 to 1.6, which is followed by a compatibility letter. Most consumer fireworks are classified HD 1.4 G.

You may also see the categories T1 and T2, and P1 and P2, which refer to 'theatrical pyrotechnic articles' and 'other pyrotechnic articles' respectively. These products are not fireworks; they should only be sold by specialised businesses (categories T2 and P2 must only be sold to a person with specialist knowledge) and are not covered in this guide.

Firework storage

If you intend to store 5 kg net explosive content (NEC)* or less of fireworks, no storage licence is necessary.

[*You will often see NEC on fireworks transportation boxes; it refers to the weight of the explosive inside the firework.]

If you want to store more than 5 kg NEC and up to 2,000 kg NEC of fireworks, you must apply to your local authority for a licence. More than 2,000 kg NEC is not suitable for retail storage. Your local authority can provide you with an application form; there may also be one on its website that you can fill in online. You must complete and return a site plan and (where relevant) a floor plan, along with the fee. The application form requires that you state the 'hazard type' and amount of NEC that you intend to store.

As stated above, HT1 and HT2 fireworks are not suitable for retail storage. The amount of HT3 and HT4 fireworks that can be stored is restricted; you can store up to:

- 250 kg NEC of HT4 fireworks in a suitable building with no separation required from other buildings or places with public access
- 25 kg NEC of HT3 fireworks, or up to 25 kg NEC of a combination of HT3 and HT4 fireworks, in a suitable building with no separation required from other buildings or places with public access
- 75 kg NEC of HT4 fireworks (and no HT3) where sleeping accommodation is adjacent to a fireworks store

Storage of more than 250 kg NEC of HT4 fireworks or storage of more than 25 kg NEC of HT3 fireworks requires a suitable building separated from other buildings or places with public access. If you wish to store more than these amounts, contact your local authority, which will also give you general advice on the safe storage and supply of fireworks.

You should seek advice from your supplier as to the suitability of the fireworks that you intend to store and supply. The storage of HT3 fireworks severely restricts the amount of fireworks that you can store in typical retail premises.

If you do not have a storeroom to use exclusively for the storage of fireworks, then HT3 or HT4 fireworks must be stored away from the shop premises or kept away from the sales area in their closed transport packaging, inside a fire-resistant cabinet or container. Up to 12.5 kg NEC of HT4 fireworks can be kept in a suitable display case, or dummy fireworks (display-only versions of fireworks containing no actual

explosive material - check with your supplier for details) can be kept on open display.

Firework supply

Without an all-year supply licence, F2 and F3 fireworks can only be supplied during the following time periods:

- From 15 October to 10 November
- From 26 to 31 December
- On the first day of the Chinese New Year and the three days immediately preceding it
- On the first day of Diwali and the three days immediately preceding it

If you wish to supply F2 and F3 fireworks outside of these periods, then you must apply to your local authority for an all-year supply licence and pay a fee of £500.

You can only supply F2 and F3 fireworks to consumers between the hours of 07:00 and 18:00. This applies all year round.

The maximum permitted quantity of F2 and F3 fireworks that can be supplied to a consumer at any one time is 5 kg total NEC.

The restrictions on the days and times in which fireworks can be sold only applies to F2 and F3 fireworks; F1 fireworks can be sold all year round (and at any time of the day) without an all-year supply licence.

Boxes of fireworks must not be split and supplied separately.

Online sales

If you wish to supply fireworks online, you must ensure that the fireworks are stored under the provisions of an explosives licence. If fireworks are supplied outside of the dates in the 'Firework supply' section, you must have an all-year supply licence.

Fireworks are explosives and can only be transported for supply by specialist couriers. Ordinary couriers and Royal Mail will not carry explosives. You should also contact a public liability insurance company and your intended fireworks supplier / courier for further details.

You must also ensure that your courier takes steps to prevent the sale of more than 5 kg of fireworks at any one delivery, and that the delivery takes place only between 07:00 and 18:00.

Banned fireworks

Any firework that exceeds 120 decibels must not be supplied to consumers.

Also banned are fireworks of the following description:

- Aerial wheel
- Banger, flash banger or double banger
- Jumping cracker
- Jumping ground spinner
- Spinner

- Mini rocket
- Shot tube that produces a loud noise as its main effect and/or has an inside diameter greater than 30 mm
- Battery containing bangers, flash bangers or double bangers
- A combination (other than a wheel) that includes one or more bangers, flash bangers or double bangers

Fireworks control zones

A local authority can designate an area within its boundary as a 'fireworks control zone', after a period of consultation with residents and others with an interest in the area. It is illegal for any person to ignite, throw or fire a firework in or into a fireworks control zone.

Organisers of an approved fireworks display are permitted to hold a fireworks display within a fireworks control zone.

CE / UKCA marking

Only fireworks that comply with safety standards, carry the CE and/or UKCA mark and are correctly labelled in English with details of the manufacturer and importer can legally be supplied to consumers.

For more information, see the 'CE / UKCA marking' guide.

Underage sales

For information on preventing underage sales of fireworks, see 'Fireworks: age restrictions'.

Further information

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has guidance on storing and selling fireworks on its website. This guidance includes a risk assessment checklist.

Detailed guidance on the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015 has been produced by the Office for Product Safety And Standards (OPSS).

The Scottish Government has produced information for retailers on the Fireworks (Scotland) Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 2021.

See also the Scottish Government web pages 'Fireworks: the law' and 'Making fireworks safer'.

Please note that now the UK has left the European Union, there are additional requirements you have to comply with. You may be classed as an importer into the Great Britain market, rather than being a distributor within the EU.

Future changes

The Government has consulted on possible changes to fireworks and pyrotechnic regulations. The proposals included restricting noisier fireworks to professionals only, updating the banned list of pyrotechnic products and reviewing the regulations covering lower risk products. It is expected that the

Government will announce any legislative changes in due course.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards Services and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law, please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

New section: 'Future changes'.

Last reviewed / updated: October 2026

Key legislation

- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Fireworks (Scotland) Regulations 2004
- Fireworks Regulations 2004
- Explosives Regulations 2014
- Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015
- Fireworks (Scotland) Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations 2021
- Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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