

# Storing and selling pyrotechnic articles safely



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## What you need to do

**Are you planning to sell pyrotechnic articles (eg theatrical pyrotechnics, marine and lifesaving pyrotechnics such as flares, paintball and airsoft products, or birdscarers)? This leaflet has been written to help you protect the safety of your staff and customers and comply with the law.**

You must do a risk assessment. This means thinking about what might cause harm to people and deciding whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm.

The main questions you need to ask yourself about how pyrotechnic articles being stored and sold on retail premises can harm people are:

- How could a fire start?
- How could it spread?
- What do I need to do to protect people if there is a fire?

The actions you need to take are actions to:

- prevent a fire starting;
- stop it spreading;
- protect people in the event of a fire.

**A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace.** You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees and others, but your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have covered all you need to. For example, a fire could be started by a cigarette so you will need to take steps to stop people smoking anywhere near the pyrotechnic articles.

There is a checklist to help you carry out your risk assessment. It can be downloaded from the HSE website at [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg467ch.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg467ch.pdf)

## Preventing a fire

### Do:

- Do exclude sources of ignition, eg sources of heat or electrical energy.
- Do stop people smoking anywhere near the pyrotechnic articles.
- Do restrict entry to the store where the pyrotechnic articles are kept.
- Do keep pyrotechnic articles away from heaters.
- Do follow your supplier's advice on returning unsold items.

**Don't:**

- Don't store pyrotechnic articles with corrosive or caustic substances such as drain cleaners, paint strippers and wood preservatives.
- Don't keep pyrotechnic articles near fertilisers and products containing peroxides (eg fibreglass hardeners).
- Don't let the pyrotechnic articles become wet or damp.

## **Stopping a fire spreading**

**Do:**

- Do keep pyrotechnic articles in closed transport packaging.
- Do use suitable storage, eg:
  - a separate room;
  - a cage in a stockroom; or
  - a cupboard or cabinet where it won't aggravate an explosive event.
- Do leave pyrotechnic articles in their closed transport packaging until you are ready to give them to your customers.
- Do avoid handling pyrotechnic articles unnecessarily.

**Don't:**

- Don't empty pyrotechnic articles into metal dustbins.
- Don't store pyrotechnic articles near anything that could catch fire easily (eg white spirit or clothing), or that could cause the fire to spread to the pyrotechnic articles (eg pallets, cardboard boxes and paper).
- Don't store in or near parked vehicles.

## **Protecting people in the event of a fire**

**Do:**

- Do ensure that all pyrotechnics in the shop sales area are kept in a suitable display cabinet.
- Do ensure all escape routes and fire exits are clear and fire exit doors unlocked.
- Do ensure that your fire detection and alarm system is tested and working properly.
- Do ensure that everyone understands that the first priority is to ensure that staff and customers leave the shop as quickly and safely as possible.
- Do carefully consider and manage the amount of stock in the shop sales area.
- Do position transport containers or other stores well away from any neighbouring premises.

**Don't:**

- Don't store pyrotechnic articles anywhere near an escape route or fire exit.
- Don't store an excessive amount either in the shop or in the stockroom.
- Don't store more than you are allowed to store under your licence.

Please note you must take special precautions if you share a building with flats or maisonettes. Contact your licensing authority for more information.

## Summary of the main legal requirements

The main regulations that are particularly relevant to the storage of pyrotechnic articles are as follows:

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require you to carry out a risk assessment but if you have fewer than five employees, you don't have to write anything down.
- The Explosives Regulations 2014 require that you take appropriate measures to prevent fire or explosion, to limit the extent of fire or explosion and to protect people from the effects of fire or explosion.
- The Explosives Regulations also require anyone storing Hazard Type 1 and Hazard Type 2 explosives or more than 5 kg net of Hazard Type 3 or Hazard Type 4 pyrotechnic articles to obtain a licence from their local authority (see 'Contacts' for further information).
- In addition, there are also general duties under both health and safety at work law and fire safety law (see [www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox](http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox)).

If you are selling pyrotechnic articles you also have duties under the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2010. These include requirements on the types of pyrotechnic articles that can be sold to members of the public as well as on the age of purchase.

## Contacts

In the metropolitan counties, ie West Midlands, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Tyne and Wear, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, the fire service is responsible for licensing and enforcing the regulations on the storage of most pyrotechnic articles.

In other areas, the licensing and enforcing authority is normally the trading standards department of your local authority.

In all areas, the trading standards department is responsible for enforcing regulations on consumer safety and age of purchase.

You can find the contact details for your local trading standards department at [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk).

Your pyrotechnic supplier is a useful source of advice and information. Your local licensing authority should also be able to advise and assist.

## Useful websites

HSE explosives pages: [www.hse.gov.uk/explosives](http://www.hse.gov.uk/explosives)

GOV.UK: search 'pyrotechnic articles' at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

The Confederation of British Industry's Explosives Industry Group: [www.eig.org.uk](http://www.eig.org.uk)

British Pyrotechnics Association: [www.pyro.org.uk](http://www.pyro.org.uk)

## **Further information**

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

This leaflet is available at [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg476.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg476.htm).

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