

# PPP Approach to Fireworks – Regulatory Management, Enforcement & Community Impact Policy 2026 - 2029

A shared service provided by  
Bracknell Forest Council,  
West Berkshire Council and  
Wokingham Borough Council



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## 1. Introduction

The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) is a shared service delivering environmental health, licensing and trading standards on behalf of two authorities (Partners), Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council. It also shares a range of services with Wokingham Borough Council including trading standards, financial investigations, intelligence functions, animal health and welfare and case management work and the technical delivery of air quality monitoring and reporting.

The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) is an enforcing authority for a range of primary legislation functions connected to the sale, storage, supply, and product safety of fireworks (pyrotechnic articles) and for investigating certain noise complaints where they may amount to a statutory nuisance. This policy sets out the Public Protection Service's approach to enforcing and executing its duties, explains how residents can be protected from the impacts of fireworks, and the boundaries of the PPP's remit and powers. It is important to recognise that there are limitations to the legislative functions, and this document sets out clearly where the service, whilst often sympathetic, do not have the ability to act.

In this policy reference to Public Protection Service and Public Protection Service Officers are references to the Councils and authorised officers of the Councils whose duty it is to enforce the relevant legislation and should be read accordingly. Enforcement activity will be undertaken by suitably qualified, experienced, trained, and authorised for the powers they exercise.

It is generally illegal to sell fireworks to anyone under 18 years of age although different minimum legal ages exist depending on the category of the fireworks.

Fireworks can only be sold by retailers during specific periods:

- 15 October - 10 November
- 26 - 31 December
- Three days before Diwali and Chinese New Year

Specialist fireworks retailers selling adult fireworks outside those periods require a separate licence.

In England and Wales, the law restricts when "adult fireworks" may be set off: it is a criminal offence to use them during the hours of 11:00pm to 7:00am, except on the permitted firework nights, when later use is allowed, that is until midnight on 5 November (Bonfire Night) and until 1:00am on New Year's Eve (31 December), Diwali, and Chinese New Year. Enforcement of these time restrictions is primarily a police responsibility, and using fireworks outside the permitted hours can lead to prosecution and penalties.

Residents are advised to purchase fireworks from reputable retailers and steer clear from buying fireworks from markets, car boots or street sellers. Fireworks bought from these sources could be defective and may not meet UK safety requirements. It is worth checking that any fireworks purchased include a CE or UKCA safety mark. In Great Britain, compliant pyrotechnic articles will carry the required conformity marking (UKCA or CE, depending on the product and route to market).

Whilst sympathetic to the impact that firework noise can have on animals it is accepted that there are no legal powers enforceable by the PPP to protect them from the harmful impacts. In minimising the impact on residents there is a logical assumption that there will also be a reduced impact on animals.

## 2. Categories of Fireworks

The legal supply categories used on labels in Great Britain are:

- **F1 – “Indoor / very low hazard” fireworks**  
These are very low risk and very low noise fireworks intended for use in confined areas, including inside domestic buildings (depending on the specific product instruction) for example party poppers and similar low-hazard effects.
- **F2 – “Garden / low hazard” fireworks**  
These are low hazard and low noise fireworks intended for outdoor use in confined areas (often described in everyday terms as *back gardens/smaller open spaces*, subject to the label safety distances).
- **F3 – “Display / medium hazard” fireworks**  
These are more powerful than F2 (a medium hazard) and intended for outdoor use in large open areas (for example, a field or large open space). Their noise level must not be harmful to human health (when used as intended and at the stated safety distances).
- **F4 – “Professional / high hazard” fireworks**  
These are high hazard fireworks intended only for people with specialist knowledge (i.e., professional operators/pyrotechnicians). Like F3, their noise level must not be harmful to human health when used properly, but they are not for general public use because the overall hazard is significantly higher.

HT1–HT4 (also known as 1.1G – 1.4G) are storage-licensing hazard types used to decide how fireworks must be stored, how much can be stored, and what separation/safety arrangements are needed. Unlike F1–F4 (which appear on the firework packaging for consumer supply), HT categories usually appear on the paperwork (invoices) related to the purchase. The retailer must keep these documents for inspections for storage compliance. The HT category is also stated on the outer transport boxes, and the fireworks should remain sealed in these wherever possible.

- **HT1 – highest hazard** -HT1 is the most dangerous hazard type. It is not suitable for retail storage, meaning standard retail shops should not be holding HT1 fireworks on their premises.
- **HT2 – very high hazard** - HT2 is also not suitable for retail storage (it sits just below HT1 in the hazard hierarchy for storage purposes).

If a business is a standard retailer, HT1/HT2 fireworks should not be part of their stockholding as these types require specialist controls beyond typical retail arrangements.

- **HT3 – higher hazard (more dangerous stock)** - HT3 fireworks are generally “more dangerous” as they have a higher explosive powder content than standard retail stock

and there are more restrictions relating to their storage. They need to be stored separately to any other category and/or in specific containers and packaging.

- **HT4 – lower hazard (typical retail consumer fireworks)** - HT4 fireworks are the types of less powerful fireworks generally sold at retailers, and most consumer-supply fireworks fall into this hazard type for storage purposes.

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.

### 3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

Firework legislation around retail supply exists primarily to prevent supply of inappropriate categories of fireworks to the general public, and to ensure age restrictions and signage requirements are met where fireworks are sold.

There are several strands that underpin fireworks regulation including:

- Sale, Possession, and Use Restrictions.
- Product Safety and Age Restrictions (Pyrotechnic Articles).
- Storage and Explosives Licensing.
- Noise and Statutory Nuisance.

#### Sale, Possession, and Use Restrictions

- The Fireworks Act 2003 provides the enabling framework for fireworks controls and associated offences and enforcement arrangements.
- The Fireworks Regulations 2004 set key rules including time-of-use restrictions (curfew) and retail licensing requirements for selling outside permitted periods.
- The Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1997 (banned/prohibited fireworks & size limits) sets out requirements about fireworks which are prohibited from supply to the general public.

#### Product Safety and Age Restrictions (Pyrotechnic Articles)

The Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015 set requirements for placing fireworks on the market and include categorisation and minimum age rules for supply.

- They prohibit the supply of F4 fireworks to the general public.
- They prohibit the supply of F2 and F3 fireworks to any person under 18.
- They prohibit the supply of F1 fireworks to any person under 16. An exception is made for Christmas crackers, which must not be supplied to any person under 12. Caps for toy guns are exempt from fireworks legislation.
- The labelling on packets of sparklers must carry the words: 'Warning: not to be given to children under five years of age'. The Regulations also explicitly impose a requirement to put up notices about the supply of sparklers.
- Where F2 and F3 fireworks are supplied or exposed for supply in any premises, a notice must be displayed setting out that it is illegal to sell these fireworks to anyone under the age of 18.
- It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to possess category F2 fireworks or category F3 fireworks in a public place.

## Storage and Explosives Licensing

- The Explosives Regulations 2014 provide the principal licensing framework for storing explosives.
- If you intend to store 5 kg net explosive content (NEC) or less of fireworks, no storage licence is necessary.
- If you want to store more than 5 kg NEC and up to 2,000 kg NEC of fireworks, you need to apply to the [PPP for a licence](#).
- For amounts exceeding 2,000kg NEC a licence is required from the Health and Safety Executive rather than the local authority. The application form for storage must state the hazard type and quantity and be submitted together with a site plan and, where relevant, a floor plan.
- HT1 and HT2 fireworks are not suitable for retail storage.
- There are restrictions around the amount of HT3 and HT4 fireworks that can be stored; 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 25kg 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 the PPP, who 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 you intend to store and supply and provide them with a copy of your licence. The storage of HT3 fireworks severely restricts the quantity of fireworks you can store in a standard retail premises. You cannot store HT3 unless this is stated on your licence.
- If you do not have a storeroom to use exclusively for the storage of fireworks, HT3 or HT4 fireworks must be stored away from the shop premises or be kept away from the sales area in their closed transport packaging, in 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 can be kept on open display.

## Noise and Statutory Nuisance

- Councils have a duty to investigate complaints that may amount to statutory nuisance under Environmental Protection Act 1990 and may serve abatement notices where the legal test is met. Practical limitations exist for fireworks because the noise is often brief and the source may be difficult to evidence before it ends.
- The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides tools available to local authorities and partners, including Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) and

Community Protection Notices (CPNs) for persistent detrimental behaviour in communities (subject to legal tests and proportionality).

- More information about how the PPP deals with Statutory Nuisance is set out in the [Nuisance Policy](#).

## 4. Scope

### What the PPP can do

This procedure explains what the PPP will do in relation to fireworks, and which types of issues Officers can deal with. It covers our work to keep people safe, support lawful businesses, and reduce the impact of fireworks on local communities. It also clarifies the main routes the Service uses so that residents, businesses and partner agencies understand what to expect and how concerns will be handled including:

- Retail supply and age-restricted sales (Trading Standards functions).
- Licensing for year-round sales (where applicable) and related compliance activity.
- Storage licensing and compliance under explosives law where the local authority is the licensing authority.
- Product safety and market surveillance for pyrotechnic articles placed on the UK market.
- Noise complaints where evidence suggests a possible statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA 1990).
- [Safety Advisory Group](#) (SAG) engagement for events using fireworks, focusing on prevention and community impact mitigation.

While the PPP cannot investigate or take enforcement action on every complaint relating to fireworks, it can play an important enabling and preventative role by supporting residents and businesses with clear information. This includes signposting to the relevant legal requirements governing the sale and use of fireworks, advising on appropriate reporting routes where nuisance or illegal activity is suspected, and directing residents where to report concerns to the appropriate responsible authorities where necessary.

In addition, the PPP undertakes targeted social media and communications campaigns in the lead-up to the fireworks season each year, helping to raise awareness of the law, promote responsible behaviour and safe and lawful use, signpost legal responsibilities and penalties, manage expectations within the community and encourage retailers to stock and promote quieter/less intrusive products where available.

### What the PPP can't do

The PPP cannot generally:

- enforce the 11pm–7am fireworks curfew (this is primarily enforced by the [Police](#)) and should be reported here: [Report antisocial behaviour | Thames Valley Police](#)
- stop single, short-lived domestic firework incidents through statutory nuisance powers where evidence thresholds cannot be met in time.
- apply specific legal protections for animals from firework noise beyond broader nuisance and community impact interventions.

While the service recognises the impact fireworks may have on animals, the PPP's enforceable legal powers are primarily framed around public safety, product safety, explosives licensing,

and statutory nuisance, not direct animal protection from noise. The Service will address this through prevention and messaging, recognising that reduced community nuisance tends to reduce wider impacts.

While the PPP will act where the law allows and where it is proportionate, there are some fireworks issues that Officers cannot resolve directly, or where another agency has the lead role.

The Fireworks Regulations place primary enforcement responsibility for night-time use restrictions with the Police. Breaches of night-time curfew for “adult fireworks” (11pm–7am, with limited festival exceptions) are criminal offences and reports about fireworks being used late at night (or being thrown/used dangerously in public places) will therefore need to be directed to them.

Even though councils must investigate potential statutory nuisance complaints, fireworks are often brief and it can be difficult to gather evidence or locate the source in time meaning the legal threshold for formal action may not be met. Statutory nuisance generally requires evidence of unreasonableness, often linked to frequency, duration and timing, which fireworks may not meet due to being short-lived. However, venues offering fireworks as part of celebrations, such as a hotel where a wedding is being held, will need to consider the timings and frequency.

The PPP cannot impose a blanket ban on lawful private firework use. The Service can only act where there is a relevant legal basis, and Officers cannot act where issues amount to purely civil neighbour disputes without evidence of a statutory nuisance or a regulatory breach.

## 5. Delivery Model

PPP officers will apply a risk-based, intelligence-led, and proportionate approach, with graduated interventions and clear explanations to residents and businesses about available remedies and enforcement limits.

The PPP discharges its duties by employing suitable, qualified, and trained staff who are authorised to carry out enforcement functions, including underage sales test purchases and storage checks by working with internal and external partners and local businesses to improve compliance and reduce harm.

Officers will use inspection, intelligence, and targeted project work to focus on problem premises and repeat complaints, having regard to standards, best practice, and relevant case law. During their inspections Officers will check that fireworks are stored safely and securely and away from potential sources of ignition and damp. They will also ensure that businesses have the required licence to legally sell and store fireworks and that the fireworks being sold conform to the relevant safety standards.

The Service undertakes both proactive and reactive work through our proactive inspection and underage sales programme and project work and by responding to service requests and intelligence gathering from residents, councillors and businesses. The general approach the

Service adopts in respect of age-restricted products is to ensure test purchasing and interventions are necessary, intelligence-led, and proportionate.

Trading Standards officers undertake underage sales work (often referred to as “test purchasing”) to assess whether businesses are complying with legal age restrictions when supplying age-restricted products, including fireworks. The PPP undertakes this work using trained, supervised underage volunteers who attempt controlled purchases in line with agreed operational procedures, enabling the service to identify good practice, target advice and support where needed, and take proportionate enforcement action where non-compliance is evidenced. During 2025/26 municipal year, the PPP completed 26 attempted purchases using underage volunteers, and none were successful.

A total of 45 premises were inspected (20 in West Berkshire, 13 in Bracknell Forest and 12 in Wokingham) in November 2025 to ensure that the quantity of fireworks and explosives stored was within the permitted limits. Trading Standards Officers also checked the category stated on the licence and that storage was safe and correct. A few corrective measures were made relating to storage methods; boxes left outside the secure cabinet and where the quantity on the shop floor was too high, they were reduced.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities including Partnership Working

Different PPP officers and partners are responsible for different aspects of fireworks sales and use.

**Trading Standards Officers** deal with fireworks being sold or supplied, making sure they are safe, sold to the right age groups, and meet legal standards.

**Environmental Health Officers** look into complaints where fireworks may be causing a statutory noise nuisance.

**Licensing Officers** are responsible for processing licences, advising on permitted events, and working with Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) for larger organised displays.

Oversight of the proactive activity and allocation of resources associated with the safe use and supply of fireworks is undertaken through the **Management and Resourcing Group**.

Reactive work is managed by the relevant Principal Officer with responsibility for the relevant activity and oversight of this work is co-ordinated through the **Principal Officers Group**.

### Partnership Working

Where issues fall outside the PPP’s powers, partner agencies take the lead this includes the Police, who enforce curfews and offences in public places, and the Fire & Rescue Service or the Health and Safety Executive, who are involved in certain fireworks and explosives licensing and safety matters.

Where organised displays occur, PPP will work through SAG processes to encourage organisers to:

- assess community impact (including vulnerable residents),

- apply appropriate controls, and
- coordinate with the Police, Emergency Planning and Fire Service as appropriate.

The PPP will work with partner organisations to support consistent messaging and coordinated interventions.

Where fireworks are proposed by premises operating under other regulatory regimes including the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005, the PPP and the SAG will work with applicants/operators to consider:

- timings and location,
- crowd management and safety, and
- the expectation of a proportionate noise management plan where complaints are likely.

Businesses are encouraged undertake the following measures to ensure underage sales are not made and the storage and supply requirements are met:

- have an age verification policy of challenge 25 in place.
- train all staff on this policy and acceptable forms of ID.
- display point of sale and shelf line notices.
- consider store layout.
- make use of till prompts.
- keep a refusals log that is checked at least monthly by a senior staff member.
- provide supply chain information to the local licensing authority on request, with an exemption where the total explosives content in a single transaction is  $\leq 50\text{kg}$ .
- consider general fire safety duties (risk assessment, fire precautions).

Retailers must also hold a valid licence and store fireworks safely in accordance with the licence.

More information for businesses can be found here: [Fireworks: age restrictions - Public Protection Partnership](#)

## 7. Complaints

If you are aware, or suspect, that fireworks are being sold illegally or that unsafe fireworks are being sold please report to the Public Protection Partnership on 01635 519930, email [tsadvice@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:tsadvice@westberks.gov.uk) or write to:

Public Protection Partnership  
Theale Library  
Church Street  
Theale  
Berkshire RG7 5BZ

## 8. Policy Review

This plan will be reviewed by the Joint Public Protection Committee on a regular basis and at least every three years, or earlier when there are significant legislative or guidance changes.

## 9. Glossary

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fireworks / pyrotechnic articles</b> | regulated as consumer products under Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015 (GB).                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Statutory nuisance:</b>              | includes noise emitted from premises or from vehicles/equipment in the street, assessed under EPA 1990; councils must investigate complaints where it is reasonably practicable.                                                                               |
| <b>Curfew offence:</b>                  | using fireworks during restricted night hours is a criminal offence under fireworks regulations; enforcement is primarily the Police.                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Supply</b>                           | (product safety law): includes sale and provision free of charge, and includes supply business-to-business                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Adult Fireworks</b>                  | In UK fireworks law, an “adult firework” is a legal term used in the Fireworks Regulations 2004 to mean any Category F2, F3 or F4 firework (i.e., outdoor fireworks ranging from “confined areas” to “large open areas”, plus professional display fireworks). |