

Blackburn Police Station
St Johns Court
Ainsworth Street
Blackburn
BB1 6AP

Dear parent,

This letter is being sent to every parent of children in the primary and secondary schools covered by Blackburn Police. It is not aimed at specific children and there is no suggestion that we are singling out your child as a potential problem. Rather, it is sent with the intention of ensuring that all parents are aware of the extent and changing nature of the problem of fireworks.

As you will be aware we are fast approaching bonfire night. There are a number of issues that as a parent you may need to be aware of.

1. **The anti social use of fireworks** resulted last year in a vast number of calls throughout our Policing area about a wide range of incidents.

- **Children and youths throwing fireworks at each other.**
- **Fireworks thrown at elderly persons or passers by.**
- **Setting fireworks off at all times of day and night weeks before bonfire night.**
- **Fireworks being put through people's letter boxes.**
- **Fireworks being thrown at cars.**
- **Phone boxes blown up by the use of home made or industrial fireworks.**

2. **Safety.** As all parents know, groups of youths acting together are not always the best judges of their own or others safety. The illicit buying of professional display fireworks or the misuse of legal but powerful fireworks and the dangers that these pose are not to be under estimated. Their use in uncontrolled situations has resulted in serious injury and even death. Partially exploded devices have to be recovered by army bomb disposal teams and this is indicative of the potential lethal consequences of their use.

The use of ordinary fireworks in juvenile horseplay or in downright anti social nastiness can have less obvious but equally serious consequences for personal safety.

3. **Legislation** does exist to prosecute persons using or possessing fireworks in a number of circumstances. This includes the following.

- ❑ **Any person under 18 years possessing adult fire works in a public place.**
- ❑ **Discharging fireworks between 23:00-07:00 except on New Years Eve or Bonfire Night.**

- ❑ **Throwing or discharging fireworks in the street or public place.**
- ❑ **Discharging a firework within 50 feet of a highway.**
- ❑ **Use of fireworks to the annoyance or danger of other residents.**
- **Other linked offences of Arson, Criminal Damage, Assault or offences under the Public Order Act.**

The police will not be in a position to apply the law over every single incident, but please be aware that where the opportunity presents itself, officers will be seizing fireworks and availing themselves of their powers. Discretion or leniency will not be encouraged. Children could find themselves in court and parents would be expected to accompany them.

Parental pressure can assist us in keeping the disruption and danger caused by the reckless use of fireworks to a minimum. Some simple actions by parents are probably worth more than the collective action of a whole number of organisations like the Police, Fire Service or Trading Standards.

- **Please keep your own fireworks secure.**
- **Do not be pressured into buying fireworks for your child (however old he or she is) for use before Bonfire Night.**
- **Monitor what your child is spending his or her money on in the lead up to Bonfire Night.**
- **Be wary of your child hiding fireworks in your house or elsewhere.**
- **Be wary of buying larger and noisier fireworks for unsupervised use.**
- **Be wary of your child using the Internet or mail order to purchase large and potentially dangerous fireworks.**
- **Be wary of elder siblings purchasing fireworks on behalf of their younger brothers, sisters or their friends. They could be committing a serious offence of supplying fireworks and in extreme circumstances could face up to six months in prison.**
- **Take the time to discuss these issues with your child prior to Bonfire Night.**
- **Be prepared to listen sympathetically to the complaints of any neighbours.**
- **Be prepared to confront the behaviour of your child if he or she does not meet the standards you have laid down.**

There is one other more basic piece of advice that would cover all problems: -

Don't let your children have their own fireworks!

Your individual co-operation and assistance in this matter would be greatly appreciated. The more parents who do this the better will be the outcome and we can all contribute towards allowing a traditional festivity to be one night of enjoyment rather than six weeks of mayhem.

**PC's 3219 Perry;268 Lanciotti
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