

businesscompanion

trading standards law explained

Storage and supply of fireworks

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This guidance is for England and Wales

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 are also 'supplied' even 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 business 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, and it is therefore 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) 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.

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 and 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 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 need to 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 or there may be one on its website, which you can fill in online. You should complete and return with the fee, a site plan and, where relevant, a floor plan. 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 you intend to store and supply. The storage of HT3 fireworks severely restricts the amount of fireworks you can store in typical retail premises.

If you do not have a storeroom to use exclusively for the storage of fireworks, HT3 or HT4 fireworks should 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 HT3 or HT4 fireworks can be kept in a suitable display case, or dummy fireworks 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 will need to apply to your local authority for an all-year supply licence and pay a fee of £500.

The maximum permitted quantity of F2 and F3 fireworks that can be supplied to a consumer at any one

time is 50 kg total NEC.

The restrictions on the days on which fireworks can be sold only applies to F2 and F3 fireworks; F1 fireworks can be sold all year round without an all-year supply licence.

Boxes of fireworks must not be split and supplied separately.

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
- a shot tube that produces a loud noise as its main effect and/or has an inside diameter greater than 30 mm
- a 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

UKCA / CE marking

Only fireworks that comply with safety standards, carry the UKCA / CE mark and are correctly labelled in English with details of the manufacturer and importer can legally be supplied to consumers. There is also a UKNI mark that needs to be used where Northern Ireland is involved.

For more information on the UKCA / CE marks - as well as the UKNI mark - see '[UKCA / CE marking](#)'.

Further information

For information on preventing underage sales of fireworks, see '[Fireworks: age restrictions](#)'.

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).

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.

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

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: October 2023

Key legislation

[Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974](#)

[Explosives Regulations 2014](#)

[Pyrotechnic Articles \(Safety\) Regulations 2015](#)

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 often only shows the original version of the legislation, although some amending legislation is linked to separately where it is directly related to the content of a guide. Information on changes to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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