

Bonfire safety

at licensed premises




Dudley
Metropolitan Borough Council

1 Can I hold a bonfire at my premises for customers?

Yes, if it is built, sited and managed in a controlled manner. Remember you have duties under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (principally in respect of risk assessment), the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, and other legislation to protect yourself, staff and customers from harm. Failure to comply with this legislation can result in prosecution for a criminal offence and you may additionally risk civil liability.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) applies and is enforced by the Fire Authority and also requires you to protect other people and their property who may be affected by your actions, such as your bonfire.

2 What factors should I consider when choosing a site for a bonfire?

A bonfire should be positioned downwind of spectators and a minimum of 15 metres away from ignition sources, flammable materials, building, structure or right of way.

This includes homes, fences, sheds, trees and shrubs, vehicles, roads or paths.

3 What size of bonfire can I build and what materials should I use?

The bonfire should be kept to a manageable size and the height should not exceed three metres. It should be constructed of clean wood, cardboard, and straw type materials stacked so as to minimise the risk of toppling over. Tyres, upholstery, etc, should not be used as they give off noxious fumes.

4 How do I separate the public from the bonfire?

Effective continuous barriers should be erected around the bonfire a minimum of one and a half times the height of the bonfire. (e.g. a three metres high bonfire requires a barrier four and a half metres away from the edge of the fire). Responsible instructed persons, identifiable by wearing fluorescent clothing, should be designated as marshals to control the crowd.

5 How can I light the bonfire safely?

Before lighting the bonfire, check its construction carefully to make sure that it is stable, and that there are no children or animals inside. Domestic firelighters and dry kindling put into a cardboard box or a straw bale should be placed within the bonfire to get it started. Never use flammable substances such as petrol or paraffin, these may cause a flashback or an explosion.

People looking after the bonfire should wear a substantial outer garment of low flammability such as wool and strong boots or shoes.

6 Do I need firefighting equipment?

Suitable fire extinguishers, buckets of water, a hose pipe that reaches the fire and a fire blanket should be readily accessible on the site.

7 Do I need to make provisions for first aid?

There should be ready access to basic first aid care and materials. In addition, a responsible person should be designated whose duty it is to summon assistance in the event of any serious injury or illness.

8 Can I leave the bonfire glowing at the end of the event?

Never leave a bonfire unsupervised. Always ensure that it has been put out effectively before leaving it.

9 If I get into difficulties with my bonfire what should I do?

If a bonfire is out of control clear spectators to safety and call the fire brigade immediately.

10 Can I hold a firework display with my bonfire?

Most public houses and clubs have insufficient space to safely hold a firework display. The space required for the firework display (excluding spectators) is:

Distances

100m x 95m for aerial fireworks e.g. rockets

100m x 65m with no aerial fireworks

If you have the necessary space and wish to consider a firework display, you should obtain a copy of “Giving your own firework display, how to run and fire it safely” HS(G) 124 from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Telephone 01787 881165 or log onto <http://books.hse.gov.uk/hse/public/home.jsf>

11 Who should I notify of my intention to hold a bonfire?

Well in advance of the date of the bonfire the following organisations should be notified:

- the local fire brigade
- the police
- the food and occupational safety service of Dudley Council.

A simple way to contact all these organisations is to consult with Dudley Council’s safety advisory group when planning an event, by logging onto www.dudley.gov.uk and clicking on ‘community and living’ in the drop-down box, followed by ‘Event safety’. An ‘event safety leaflet’ with details of how to notify your event will be found there.

In addition, you may wish to contact your local first aid organisation and the media.

You could also inform neighbours who may be affected by drifting smoke (shutting windows, getting washing in, etc).

12 What do I need to do about outdoor catering?

If you are going to undertake any food preparation which is not part of your normal catering operation, such as barbecues or special menus, please contact the food and occupational safety service of Dudley Council prior to the event.

Remember also that if you allow a third party to carry out any catering then unless the operation is carried out competently and safely your reputation is at risk.

For further advice or information contact Dudley Council’s food and occupational safety service Directorate of the urban environment
Claughton House
Blowers Green Road
Dudley DY2 8UZ
Telephone 01384 814685

Every year there are many injuries, some of which are serious and occasionally fatal which arise in the course of bonfire events. Many of these could have been avoided had simple precautions been taken. The information in this code relates to public houses and clubs and is intended to assist proprietors of such businesses in assessing what they need to do in respect of ensuring safety at bonfire events.

The code contains brief details of good practice which if followed will generally enable you to comply with your legal duties. It is not compulsory but has the support of Dudley Council, the fire authority and the police force. It is not a complete statement of the law and it may be that as a result of considering all of the circumstances during the course of your risk assessment you will identify additional necessary steps.