

Heed fireworks by-laws



Remember, remember the fifth of November, goes the rhyme - but residents will do better to remember the by-laws regarding fireworks on Guy Fawkes Night.

SOME 400 years after the event, South Africans still celebrate Guy Fawkes Day by lighting fireworks

and bonfires, and dressing up and putting on performances - but fireworks are strictly controlled through City by-laws.

Safety of children and pets also needs to be considered, and the Johannesburg metro police warn that people who use firecrackers carelessly will be charged.

"A fine of up to R10 000 will be imposed on those found guilty of breaking the law. If they get caught, they will be charged for contravention of the by-laws," says the emergency management services' Nana Radebe.

Safety is paramount - fireworks are dangerous, and people are encouraged to keep a few safety tips in mind:

- Pick a site that is appropriate for lighting crackers;
- Clothes must be fire resistant;
- Set up the display in the daylight;
- Check the wind direction before starting the display;
- Pick up all the remains of the fireworks and keep them out of children's reach; and
- Fireworks should be handled by adults, and children should watch the display from a distance.

In terms of the City's by-laws, no person should use fireworks within 500 metres of any explosives factory, explosives storage place, petrol depot or petrol station, inside any building, at any public place or at any school, old age home or hospital. A fine of R1 500 may be slapped on any person found violating these laws.

Lighting or igniting fireworks in any place where animals are present will incur a fine of R1 000.

Children

Minors may not be allowed to light or ignite fireworks by any person caring for them - no-one under the age of 16 is allowed to handle or use fireworks, except if they are supervised by an adult. Retailers may not sell fireworks to a child under the age of 16.

To stage a fireworks display, permission must first be first sought in writing from the fireworks working committee or from the chief fire officer in that particular region. The application must reach the committee or

the chief fire officer 14 days before the planned display, to allow members of the public to launch any objections.

If an application to present a fireworks display is approved by the council, it may require that the display be presented only on "suitable premises designated by the council and under the supervision and control of an official designated by the council".

This law is not only for public spaces; permission must also be sought to set off crackers in private yards. In the application, the person must outline the plan of the house, including any overhead pylons. A site inspection by the emergency management services will be conducted.

However, permission is not needed on days of cultural and religious celebrations, but the fireworks may only be set off during stipulated times. These include Diwali, Chinese New Year, Human Rights Day, Guy Fawkes Day, Christmas Eve and the Day of Goodwill.

On these days, fireworks can be set off between 7pm and 10pm. Setting them off outside these times carries a R500 fine. It is illegal to let off fireworks after midnight on any day except New Year's Eve. On this day, fireworks are only allowed between 11pm and 1am.

A fine R1 500 can be incurred for the illegal use of firecrackers or fireworks in public. The by-laws also specify that only licensed dealers may sell fireworks.

Animals

While fireworks may be fun for humans, they are particularly distressful for animals. Dogs and cats often run away and are frequently knocked over by cars as they panic and run wildly from the noise.

Animals should be kept indoors, with the curtains closed and the television or radio switched on to distract the pets. A quiet place, such as a carrier, may give a sense of security and comfort.

While bonfires are the Guy Fawkes tradition in the United Kingdom - where the celebration began - in South Africa's townships children dress up in their parents' clothes and visit neighbours, knocking on doors in their areas.

Commonsense rules should be applied before allowing children to go off down the street. Advise children they should never get into a car with someone they do not know; should stay in a group with friends - don't lag behind; not go into a house of a person they do not know; always tell an adult where they are going and when they will return; and not allow any physical contact.

The dressing up is taken seriously - children can be seen dressed in parents' and grandparents' finery, with granny's bras fully padded, bums cushioned to add motion and drama to the performance and faces smudged with bright make-up.

Guy Fawkes Day is to township children what Halloween is to children in the suburbs. They wander around in groups, putting on performances at intersections and busy public places for a coin or two. In some townships, later in the evening, fireworks are set off.

According to City by-laws, fireworks are allowed on specific days, at specific times:

New Year's Eve from 11pm to 1am;
New Year's Day from 7pm to 10pm;
Lag b'omer from 7pm to 10pm;

Chinese New Year from 7pm to 10pm;
Human Rights Day from 7pm to 10pm;
Freedom Day from 7pm to 10pm;
Diwali from 7pm to 10pm;
Guy Fawkes Day from 7pm to 10pm;
Christmas Eve from 7pm to 10pm; and
Day of Goodwill from 7pm to 10pm.

In an emergency, call the City's Emergency Connect on 011 375 5911 or the nationwide emergency response on 10111.

Read more: http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&id=4500&itemid=24#ixzz3qbvvzRs2