



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Protecting Our Community

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 8

BONFIRE ADVICE

Our bonfire safety advice does not guarantee a completely safe bonfire, but informs the community of the hazards and measures to reduce the potential risks to communities, properties and the environment.

Bonfires can pose a very real risk to public safety and property. There is no such thing as a completely safe bonfire. All fires have the potential to be dangerous, particularly in an uncontrolled environment where the following factors are not fully known, are difficult to assess and can change at any time:

- material used;
- weather conditions;
- environmental conditions;
- proximity and surrounding environment;
- human behaviour;
- supervision; and
- control measures.

NIFRS does not have any statutory duty or legislative powers to risk assess or inspect bonfire sites on behalf of individuals, organisations or statutory agencies. Therefore, we will not risk assess bonfires. The ultimate responsibility lies with the owner of the land on which the bonfire is built. NIFRS has no enforcement power in relation to the size and location of bonfires.

If agreement has been reached to build a bonfire, the landowner should consider the following guidance:

- Consult and inform any neighbours prior to having a bonfire.
- Be careful what materials are used in the bonfire, eg:
 - damp material can cause excess smoke;
 - tyres, plastics, paints and materials containing foam can produce large amounts of smoke and toxic fumes;
 - aerosols, cylinders and canisters may explode causing injury; and
 - don't throw any fireworks into the fire.
- The bonfire should only be built in a clear open space to reduce the likelihood of fire spread by radiated heat.
- Petrol, paraffin or accelerants should never be used.
- Bonfires should be supervised at all times, with onlookers maintaining a safe distance.
- At any sign of danger, or in the event of an emergency, dial 999 and ask for Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.

NIFRS will visit bonfire sites throughout the year to engage with the community. This enables our firefighters to gather information that may assist, should an operational response be necessary, for example:

- to consider hydrant locations, access/egress options, level and type of resources;
- to gain additional information useful for briefing fire officers and firefighters on duty when the bonfire is lit; and
- to minimise the possibility of attacks should we be called upon to undertake firefighting duties at bonfire sites.

If you are attending a bonfire:

- keep a safe distance from the fire – especially children who should be supervised at all times;
- keep pets and animals away from the fire; and
- at any sign of danger, or in the event of an emergency, dial 999 and ask for Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.

Remember, if NIFRS is tasked to a bonfire related incident, it is because someone from the local community has a concern and requires NIFRS assistance.

For further information phone NIFRS HQ 028 9266 4221 or visit www.nifrs.org

