

Police launch Operation Moonbeam 2019



Police Scotland. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com
Police Scotland is once again dedicating a range of specialist resources to assist local Police Commanders over Halloween and Bonfire Night.

Operation Moonbeam, which launched in 2018, was the Force's response to high levels of damage and violence between during the same period in 2017.

During these incidents emergency service workers were targeted, including one incident in Edinburgh where a Police Sergeant was injured after a firework struck her.

Last year's Halloween and Bonfire Night weekend experienced significantly lower levels of disorder than the previous year and Operation Moonbeam will once again provide communities across Scotland with reassurance that firework-related criminality will not be tolerated.

A number of specially-trained officers will be deployable to all Policing Commanders in the West and East of the country and these assets will support the large number of local officers already in place for the Halloween and Bonfire Night celebrations.

Assistant Chief Constable Kenny MacDonald said: "We know that the Halloween and Bonfire Night weekend is one of the busiest in the calendar, not only for police, but all emergency services, and Operation Moonbeam was launched to provide an appropriate response to any disorder that occurs and ensure our communities, officers and partners remain safe.

"However, dedicating greater police resource during this weekend does not solve the issues we see arising each year, and we are mindful of that.

"Operation Moonbeam 2019 will be a tri-service collaborative approach to not only responding to disorder and damage, but preventing it in the first instance.

"Significant time and effort has already been put into engagement and education of young people through our School Link Officers and representatives from the other emergency services. However, there is a parental responsibility, which cannot be overlooked.

"I want everyone who has guardianship of young people to have a frank conversation with them about the consequences

associated with getting involved with violence and disorder. I would also like to remind people of the potential consequences and dangers associated with fireworks.

“Not only does this unacceptable behaviour put themselves and others at risk, it will result in a criminal record when they are caught.

“Please help us keep the Halloween and Bonfire night celebrations fun and enjoyable for everyone.”

Assistant Chief Officer John Dickie is the SFRS Director for Response and Resilience added: “Attacks on emergency responders are completely unacceptable and I am sure the public would be outraged by incidents where emergency service workers have been targeted while working to protect people and property.

“For us, this type of behaviour not only prevents our crews from bringing any emergency to a safe and swift conclusion but can also impact on our emergency service colleagues who may have to support us.

“This cannot be condoned.

“We will work to identify those responsible and we will pass that intelligence to our police partners which can result in a variety of consequences.

“I would encourage everyone to have a safe and responsible Bonfire Night, and wherever possible to attend an organised public display.”

John Alexander, the Scottish Ambulance Service’s Head of Service for the East Region, said: “In recent years, we have seen a significant increase in demand for our services during the Halloween and Bonfire Night period. We would urge people to please only use 999 in an emergency and use the most appropriate alternative pathways if it’s not an emergency.

“We would also ask people to be respectful and mindful when out trick-or-treating, especially with vulnerable and elderly patients. If you are out celebrating during this period, please be considerate – look after yourself and consider the impact your actions may have on others.

“Our crew and patient safety is paramount to us, so we are fully engaged with Operation Moonbeam to ensure their safety during this period. We will also be providing specialist support to the tri-service operation as required□.

Sandra Harkness, Chair of SCOTSS, the Trading Standards heads of service organisation said: “Fireworks can only be sold to over 18s and must be bought from one of the 650 licensed sellers across Scotland in the period 15th October – 10th November .

“Fireworks can be dangerous if not used properly, so it is important that instructions are followed closely, and always keep fireworks away from children, and pets.

“The best advice is to save yourself the trouble and expense and attend an organised display instead. At such events, spectators are kept at a safe distance while qualified individuals do the work, minimising risk for everyone.

“If you become aware of any unlicensed sellers of fireworks then report this to your local trading standards office or through the Advice Scotland Helpline on 0808 164 6000”