

# **Police announce zero tolerance approach to violence in run up to Bonfire night**

**Police have launched their annual campaign to keep the public safe during the period between Halloween and Bonfire Night and announced that a zero tolerance approach towards violence and threatening behaviour is being taken whilst everyone is urged to act responsibly if handling fireworks.**

Operation Crackle will see local officers throughout the Capital out on patrol during evenings and weekends to deter antisocial and criminal activity involving fireworks and keep communities safe from disorder and damage.



Halloween and Bonfire Night weekends are typically some of the busiest times for police, not only in Edinburgh, but across the city, and as always a partnership approach is being taken by the division.

Working alongside the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and City of Edinburgh Council, officers have been engaging with young people through school inputs and social media to highlight the risks associated with fireworks and the consequences of getting involved in any forms of crime using these items.

In addition, police have conducted joint patrols with council environmental wardens and SFRS personnel to carry out environmental audits and identify any debris or materials that could be used to start bonfires.

When found, these items have been removed.

While working to ensure the safety of the public within the city, Operation Crackle also looks to preserve the safety of all emergency service workers deployed during the coming weekends.

Supporting Operation Crackle, Police Scotland's national initiative, Operation Moonbeam is again in place to support local divisions with a range of additional and specialist resources.

These additional officers can be used if public disorder and violence takes place requiring a more robust response.

Dispersal zones will be in operation across Edinburgh again this year in an attempt to combat antisocial behaviour and disorder over the bonfire period.

This is the third year dispersal zones have operated across the city. The zones will run between 2pm and midnight on Wednesday 4th November to Saturday 7th November.

The areas covered by the zones include Muirhouse, West Pilton, Portobello, Loganlea, Saughton, Gorgie, Gilmerton, Moredun and Southhouse.

The dispersal zones enable police to instruct groups of two or more people who are congregating and behaving in an antisocial manner in these areas to disperse. Those who fail to comply, or fail to stay away for up to 24 hours, can face arrest.

Police are asking parents and guardians to have frank conversations with young people in their care and remind them to behave in a manner that does not put themselves, or others,

at risk of harm.

Unlike previous years, organised Bonfire Night events have all been cancelled as a result of COVID-19. Police patrols will take place across the city to identify illegal bonfires, as well as deal with any breaches of current Scottish Government coronavirus restriction legislation.

Chief Inspector David Happs, who is leading on Operation Crackle, said: "We know that the vast majority of those who purchase fireworks do so in order to enjoy Bonfire Night responsibly. However, a small minority use the Halloween and Bonfire Night period to get involved in disorder and commit acts of violence and damage.

"Let me make it clear, that such behaviour is not acceptable and if you are involved in criminality involving fireworks, you can expect to be arrested. If not on the night, then as we carry out follow-up inquiries.

"I know many people will be really disappointed that they are unable to attend organised events this year, but I would urge everyone to be mindful of existing guidelines and legislation aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19. Please do not do anything that puts you in breach of the current restrictions.

"For the past three years, we have been able to call upon additional specialist national resources to assist local officers. Once again, these officers are available if they are needed and I'm grateful to have them as an operational consideration.

"We want everyone to have a great Halloween and Bonfire Night, but please enjoy these events responsibly and help us keep you, and everyone else, safe throughout."

Kenny Rogers, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Senior Officer for the City of Edinburgh, said: "This Bonfire Night will be a different experience for many of us.

“We know that many organised public displays have been cancelled due to COVID-19 and that some may consider private use of fireworks in their gardens.

“We would urge caution over the private use of fireworks and remind people that these items can pose grave dangers.

“If you are planning on using fireworks in a private setting, please familiarise yourself with our Fireworks Code before purchasing. It is designed to help keep you and your loved ones safe.

“I would like to stress that this is our busiest night of the year and that we must maintain a capacity to respond to emergencies.

“Last year we saw a large spike in deliberate fire-setting and this can divert firefighters away from genuine emergencies, where lives may be at risk.

“We do take a zero-tolerance approach to fire-setting and will work with police to identify those responsible, but we also realise it’s a very small minority of people involved.

“Ultimately, I would urge those who are marking Bonfire Night to help us by reading all safety advice before using fireworks and by helping protect Scotland’s emergency services.”

“For more information visit our fireworks safety page at [www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/fireworks-safety.aspx](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/fireworks-safety.aspx)”

Councillor Amy McNeese-Mechan, Chair of Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership said: “Protecting our communities from harm is a priority for us all in the Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership and we will continue to work with our partners to prevent anti-social behaviour in the lead up to Bonfire Night to ensure that Edinburgh remains a safe place for its residents.”

“It’s important that we all look after each other. Fly tipping

during the Bonfire and Fireworks season can be a major cause of fire and we ask that if anyone sees fly tipping or notices an area where there is a build-up of refuse or combustible material to please let the council know.”