

## Illegal fireworks

Despite the provisions of the legislation, there are those who, without care for the safety of others, sell fireworks illegally. These fireworks are not the type previously used on 'cracker night' but are more dangerous. They are cheap imports and the quality is poor. The danger they present to unsuspecting buyers is high. To use these safely requires specialised knowledge, skills and training.

These types of fireworks have caused serious injury to children and adults. People should be wary of illegal supplies, should avoid any areas where they are being used, and should pass any information in relation to these dangerous supplies to the Explosives Inspectorate, or to the police.

## Fireworks are entertaining

When properly carried out by competent, licensed and experienced operators, fireworks displays provide great thrills and excitement. Most people in Queensland are in favour of these professional displays and enjoy the spectacular, artistic effects often seen in highly visual and audible choreographed displays.

However, such fireworks are to be used only by properly trained operators who are required to put thought into the planning and safety controls that must apply. Spectators should listen to any advice provided by the organisers, the contractor or operator, or any security personnel at a fireworks display, and should stay outside the designated hazard zone.



## Further information about fireworks can be obtained from your local Explosives Inspector.

### Brisbane

275 George Street  
Brisbane, Qld 4000

Phone: 3199 8023  
Email: [explosives@dnrme.qld.gov.au](mailto:explosives@dnrme.qld.gov.au)

### Rockhampton

25 Yeppoon Road, Parkhurst  
PO Box 3679, Red Hill Rockhampton, Qld 4701

Phone: 4936 0187  
Email: [croexplosives@dnrme.qld.gov.au](mailto:croexplosives@dnrme.qld.gov.au)

### Townsville

Level 10, Verde Tower  
445 Flinders Street  
Townsville, Qld 4810

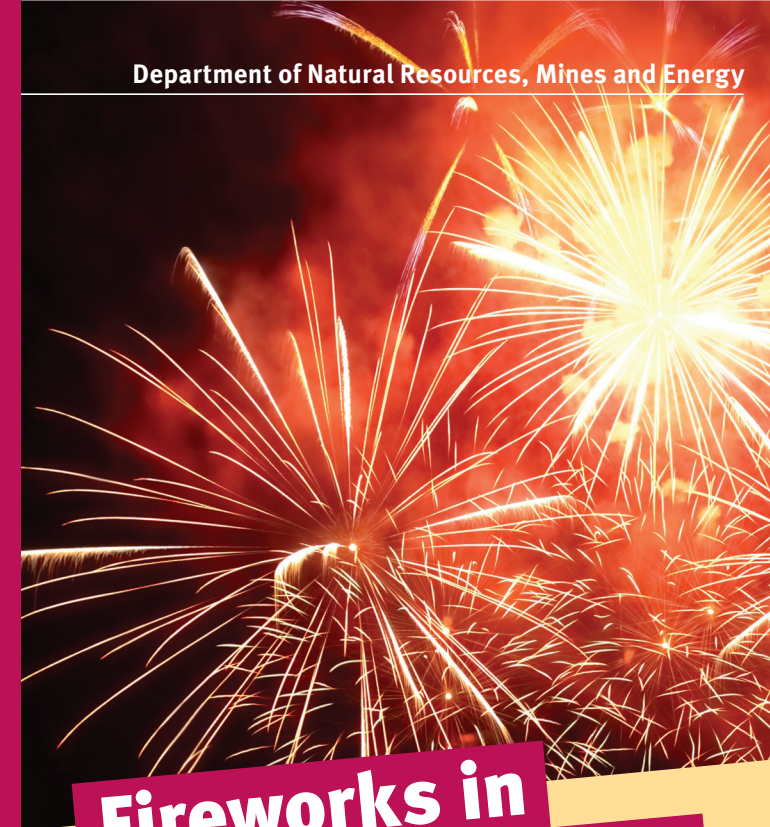
Phone: 4447 9277  
Email: [nroexplosives@dnrme.qld.gov.au](mailto:nroexplosives@dnrme.qld.gov.au)

### 24-hour explosives response number

1300 739 868

### Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy

13GOV (137 468)  
[www.dnrme.qld.gov.au](http://www.dnrme.qld.gov.au)



## Fireworks in Queensland

### Keep our communities safe and secure from explosives

Fireworks can be fun for all—however, it is important that people are aware of the law covering fireworks and the primary reasons for the restrictions imposed.

## History

Fireworks have been around for well over a thousand years and are the earliest known explosives. They contain materials that burn energetically and which, if confined, may explode.

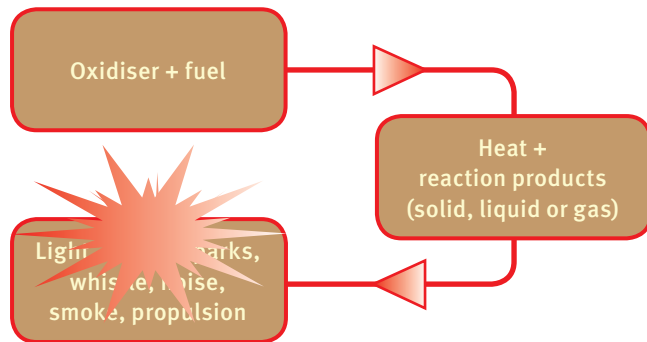
Black powder was developed hundreds of years ago and was one of the first mixtures used in incendiary compositions. The enormous energies released by this composition were recognised and were put into use in military and mining activities.

Today, black powder is still the single most important composition in fireworks construction and use.

## How they work

Fireworks contain a chemical rich in oxygen and one or more fuels that will react with oxygen. Different chemicals create the colour, spark, noise and other effects.

Heat generated by the reaction of these chemicals is sufficient to maintain the effect. As fireworks have their own oxygen, air is not required for the reaction—so they are very difficult to extinguish in a firefighting situation.



Flames, sparks, heat, impact or friction can supply the energy necessary to cause fireworks to ignite. When they do, they react at the speed of sound and produce heat and gases. If confined, the reaction rate increases, developing pressures that also add to the reaction rate, establishing a vicious cycle regardless of containment.

**All fireworks are very easy to ignite and contain energetic materials and are therefore very DANGEROUS.**

## Categories of fireworks

Fireworks fall into several categories:

**Unrestricted fireworks** are those available to the public through retail outlets. These include sparklers, bonbons, streamer cones and caps for toy guns.

**Shopgoods fireworks** are those traditionally used by the public at 'cracker nights'. Since 1972, the sale of these to the public has been prohibited in Queensland. However, some states and territories still allow their use (e.g. Northern Territory). They should contain less than 40 grams of explosive.

**Display fireworks** are generally larger and intended for use in outdoor public displays, such as fetes, shows and other major events. These can only be used by licensed fireworks professionals and include:

- **strings of crackers** used during Chinese New Year celebrations
- **ground level fireworks** which primarily function from ground level (may project burning stars and other effects, such as mines, roman candles and fountains)
- **aerial fireworks** designed to be fired from a mortar into the air where they burst (e.g. star shells and salute shells).

**Close proximity fireworks** are those where minimum clearance distances are less than the distances required for an outdoor display. These may be used indoors or outdoors, at venues such as theatres or concert halls.

**Special effects fireworks** are those designed to produce a specific effect, such as a flash, sound or smoke for film and TV productions.



## Regulations in Queensland

Those who are old enough would remember that Queensland used to have 'cracker night' when shopgoods fireworks were generally available.

However, because of the extensive number of injuries, the frequency of property damage and the general disruption that was experienced on these occasions, the government banned 'cracker night' in 1972. The use of fireworks was limited to public displays, conducted by competent, licensed operators.

The Queensland public is still able to enjoy fireworks on a larger and more spectacular scale, without the adverse effects experienced before 1972. Most other states in Australia have progressively adopted a similar approach.

## Current situation

In Queensland, fireworks are controlled under the *Explosives Act 1999* and are declared security sensitive explosives. Only those issued with licences under the Act are allowed to use and handle fireworks other than unrestricted fireworks. The following requirements apply:

- Only competent and licensed fireworks contractors can purchase fireworks and organise a fireworks display.
- Only competent and licensed operators are able to possess and use fireworks.
- Only competent and licensed sellers are able to purchase and sell fireworks.
- Only competent and licensed storers are able to purchase and store fireworks.
- Only competent and licensed importers are able to import fireworks.
- Once the load is above a specific maximum, only competent and licensed transporters are able to transport fireworks.



Licensed persons are required to work to specific legislative requirements.

Possession of fireworks by unlicensed persons constitutes a breach of the legislation. **A penalty in excess of \$52 220 and six months imprisonment can apply.**