

Beware of bonfire bandits and don't burn waste

As well as the safety risks caused by bonfires, they have an impact on the climate and, if the wrong materials are burned, can harm wildlife, the environment and human health.

The only materials that should be used in bonfires are dry, untreated and unpainted wood, along with small amounts of paper or cardboard. Using wet wood creates smoke which can spread and cause a nuisance to neighbours, and bonfires can quickly get out of control if not properly managed.

If you are intending to have a bonfire at home, don't use it to dispose of household waste, such as plastic, rubber, glass, oils or metal. These materials could cause a pollution risk to water, air, soil, plants, animals or the countryside and should be disposed of through recycling or household waste collections or at council recycling centres. Always check the bonfire for hedgehogs and other wildlife before setting light to it and don't allow anyone else to add materials to your bonfire, other than clean, dry, untreated wood.

It's not just householders that may use Bonfire Night as a way of getting rid of rubbish. Businesses may use it to burn waste, too. But the Environment Agency also urges them to be aware of what they are burning.

Whether you are a business owner or householder, if paying someone to take waste away, always check they are licensed waste carriers, who will dispose of waste correctly. Unfortunately, criminals working in illegal waste operations may also use the celebration to dispose of hazardous and inappropriate waste.

There are strict rules on what can – and can't – be burned in bonfires to avoid environmental harm

As well as the harm and nuisance burning the wrong kind of waste can cause, burning of most types of waste is illegal and can carry a fine of up to £50,000.

Kevin Baker of the Environment Agency said:

We want people to have fun on Bonfire Night – but to do so safely and in a way that won't create a risk to the environment, wildlife and to you and your neighbours.

The best way of doing that, is to stop burning waste altogether and go to a properly organised community event, where organisers, hopefully, should have followed our guidelines and won't be causing

a hazard.

Ros Clarke, group manager for prevention at Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, said:

Bonfire night and the days surrounding it can be busy for us, and our emergency service colleagues. The safest way to enjoy bonfire night is to go to an organised professional bonfire night event, rather than holding your own bonfire.

If you see a bonfire being built, which you think may contain hazardous materials, you can contact the Environment Agency on our 24-hour helpline at 0800 807060 or report it anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. You can check if a waste carrier is licensed [here](#).