

# THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

3 December 2007

## ONE YEAR ON FROM MARLIE FARM EXPLOSION DEATHS: NO GOVERNMENT ACTION ON FIREWORK CONTAINER “BOMBS”

The Fire Brigades Union is calling for an overhaul of the regulations that cover the import, manufacture, transport and storage of fireworks in the UK. The move comes on the first anniversary of the deaths of two fire service personnel in an explosion at Marlie Farm in East Sussex on 3rd December 2006.

The union says the investigation into the Marlie Farm explosion uncovered a number of other incidents involving fireworks where lives had been lost and many people injured. The union warns that emergency services and the public are being put in needless danger because of confused regulation, lack of monitoring and the poor labelling of imported fireworks.

It warns that four major fireworks incidents in the UK and similar incidents in six other countries found: The labelling on imported fireworks is unreliable; regulation is hampered by too many agencies being involved with little co-operation between them; serious concerns that steel freight containers [ISO containers] are inappropriate for the storage or transportation of fireworks; poor information and guidance for emergency services seriously hampered their ability to prepare and successfully execute their response.

Responsibility for policing and enforcing the regulations involves **five government departments**: The Home Office, HM Revenue and Customs, Department of trade and industry, Department of work and pensions and Communities and local government.

Responsibility for policing and enforcing these regulations involves a number of agencies: HM Revenue and Customs, The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Local Authority Trading Standards, Local Authority Police Forces and Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services)

It is difficult to say exactly how many separate organisations are involved. Even treating HM Revenue and Customs and the HSE as single units leave 46 local fire authorities, 43 local police authorities and 410 local Councils **adding up to over 500 agencies responsible for enforcing fireworks regulation.**

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: “In fires containers packed with fireworks can cause the same devastation as some military bombs and artillery shells. Despite the dangers already identified there has been no action from Government, the Health and Safety Executive or the other regulatory agencies.

“At present there is no effective regulation of fireworks standards, labelling, transportation or storage. Government and its agencies have done nothing to properly address what we have already learned about firework linked explosions at incidents in the UK and other countries.

“Emergency services and the public are being put needlessly at risk by this inaction. The current regime is too complex and isn’t working.

“We need one agency in overall control. The regulating agencies need to have a comprehensive programme of inspection and enforcement to achieve an acceptable level of risk.”

View the videos of how fireworks in ISO containers explode [www.chaf.info/](http://www.chaf.info/)

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