

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIAL EFFECTS (SPFX), PYROTECHNIC & FIREWORKS DISPLAYS**



Explosives, special effects, open flame and/or pyrotechnics are carefully monitored for use, storage and transportation and only permitted under strict supervision by the NYC Fire Department Explosive Unit.

The Explosives Unit, a specialized unit within the Bureau of Fire Prevention, carefully regulates the use, storage and transportation of special effects and pyrotechnics for motion pictures, theatre, special events and firework displays. This information is intended to provide technical and general information for industry professionals and the general public.

- **The use of firecrackers, sparklers or any other fireworks are **illegal** in NYC unless a FDNY permit is issued under special conditions.**
- **It is **illegal** to have fireworks in your **possession** in New York City unless you have a FDNY permit and a certified Pyrotechnician. Immediately notify the FDNY or the NYC Police Department if you are aware of the possession or the use of illegal fireworks, sparklers, or other similar devices.**

**Nationwide, in the year 2000, illegal fireworks caused over 11,000 serious injuries (5,500 to children under 14 yrs. of age). Many of these injuries are permanent.**

**Further information can be obtained by calling the Explosive Unit at 718-999-1595.**

# SPECIAL EFFECTS (SPFX)

## 1. What is a “special effect?”

A special effect is a visual or audible effect used for entertainment purposes, often used to create an illusion. For example, smoke can be produced to create the impression of fog. A flash of light and a loud sound can create the impression that a cannon has been fired.

## 2. Why does the FDNY regulate the use of special effects in NYC?

Using special effects **anywhere** is dangerous, **especially** in a metropolis such as New York City. Improper use or storage creates risk to individuals and property. Another concern is panic created by fire, noise and smoke caused by the effect.

## 3. How does a company obtain a FDNY permit for a special effect?

- a) Is an inspection needed?
- b) How much does it cost?
- c) What is the process?

First step- The company must contact the Manager of the Explosive Unit at 718-999-1595.

- a) **Is an inspection needed?** – Yes, the FDNY performs a site inspection prior to approval.
- b) **What is the cost?** - Generally \$210 per hour. Contact the Explosives Unit Manager for details.
- c) **What is the process?** - Applicants are instructed to submit the following documents for permit consideration:
  1. Letter of Intent on company letterhead.
  2. Letter of Consent from the Property Owner granting permission.
  3. Permit from the Mayor’s Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting, or the Mayor’s Office of Community Assistance Unit- Street Activity Permit Office.
  4. Certificate of Insurance.
  5. Name of FDNY Pyrotechnics Certificate of Fitness (COF) Holder.
  6. Description of Effect.
  7. Other Pertinent Information as may be required.

#### 4. Who is authorized to legally supervise any use of special effects in the New York City?

- A Certificate of Fitness holder is required to supervise Special Effects. The FDNY administers COF tests at 9 Metro Tech Center, Brooklyn, New York. Typically, for low level special effects such as candles, lit cigarettes, and minor effects. This COF category is E-19.
- High level Special Effects could involve an exploding car or other dangerous use of fire. This COF category is E-18.
- A Certificate of Fitness (E-20) is required by the FDNY to supervise Pyrotechnic (Fire Works) Show. This COF is needed for **all** staff involved in loading or firing a fireworks display.
  - a) The Notice of Examination study material and information to obtain the COF is available by clicking [view NOE](#).

#### 5. How can I tell if an individual has a valid Certificate of Fitness?

All certified individuals with a Certificate of Fitness (CoF) must have a card issued by the FDNY. All COFs begin with an 8 or 6. All COFs have photographs. The Explosive Unit can confirm whether a COF is active. The Explosive Unit verifies whether the COF holder is acceptable to the FDNY.

#### 6. Must I contact any other City agency for authorization other than the Fire Department?

Yes, if you are filming, the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting <http://home.nyc.gov/html/filmcom/html/permdownloads.html> (212-489-6218) or Mayor's Office of Community Assistance Unit- Street Activity Permit Office at [http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/sapo\\_faq.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/sapo_faq.html) (212-788-7887) must be contacted. They must approve any production within NYC.

# PYROTECHNIC DISPLAYS



## 1. What is a pyrotechnic display?

A Pyrotechnic Display is created through the use of pyrotechnic materials and devices.

## 2. Why are pyrotechnic displays regulated in NYC?

Using pyrotechnics (fireworks) **anywhere** is **dangerous especially** in a metropolis such as New York City. Improper use, or storage, creates risk to individuals and property. FDNY Inspectors establish appropriate safety measures that includes crowd management, security, fire protection clearance zones, and emergency response procedures.

## 3. Does the type and amount of pyrotechnics affect how a permit is issued?

No, since all pyrotechnics used in New York City require a permit. The only variable is the type of pyrotechnic and the safety measures required.

## 4. How does a company obtain a FDNY permit for a pyrotechnic display?

- **Is there an inspection?** Yes
- **How much does it cost?** Initial site inspection fee is \$210. Thereafter, If monitored, \$ 420 per shift.
- **What is the process?** Submit required documents for review and approval; site inspection; and permit issuance.



5. **What Pyrotechnic companies can I legally use?**

Only FDNY approved Pyrotechnic companies are authorized to work within NYC for Fireworks displays.

Approved companies as of 9/23/03 are:

NAME	LOCATION	TELEPHONE
BAY FIREWORKS	HUNTINGTON, NY	631-549-0900
FIREWORKS BY GRUCCI	BROOKHAVEN, NY	631-286-0088
GARDEN STATE FIREWORKS	MILLINGTON, NJ	800-999-0912
PYRO SPECTACULARS	RIALTO, CAL.	909-874-1644
VINELAND FIREWORKS	VINELAND, NJ	856-697-1023
ZAMBELLI FIREWORKS	NEW CASTLE, NJ	800-245-0397
ZENITH PYROTECHNOLOGY	DEER PARK, NY	631-242-2110

6. **Who is authorized to legally supervise any pyrotechnic displays in New York City? How is it obtained?**

A FDNY Certificate of Fitness holder must supervise pyrotechnic displays. Applicants pay \$ 25 to take the COF exam. If successful, applicants pay fingerprint fees necessary for a background investigation. The Notice of Examination provides detailed information. You can obtain the Notice of Examination by clicking [here](#).

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/cof\\_study\\_material/e\\_20\\_study\\_material.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/cof_study_material/e_20_study_material.pdf)

7. How can I tell if an individual has a valid Certificate of Fitness?

All certified individuals with a Certificate of Fitness (COF) must have a card issued by the FDNY. All COFs begin with an 8 or 6. All COFs have photos to identify the holder. The Explosive Unit can confirm whether a COF is active.

8. Must I contact any other governmental agency for authorization other than the Fire Department?

Yes, firework displays require approval from the United States Federal Aviation Administration. However, additional approvals may be required.

- For example, if it were planned for the East River using barges, the US Coast Guard's approval would become necessary.
- If the planned location is in a NYC Park, the NYC Parks Department must approve.

The Explosive Unit will advise applicants of the appropriate approvals.