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## CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES IN THE HARROGATE DISTRICT

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### MEDIA RELEASE

Pr1054.Firework safety campaign 04.doc    DATE: 27 September 2004

**Photo opportunity – see below**

#### **FIREWORKS – BE SAFE NOT SORRY CAMPAIGN**

New legislation will change the way fireworks are sold and used but one thing remains constant – concern over safety. That is why North Yorkshire's three emergency services, with the backing of the Harrogate District Safer Communities Partnership, are taking major steps to introduce the safety message direct to schools in the hope of reducing accidents and incidences of anti-social behaviour.

From Monday, 4 October, representatives of North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Rescue and Ambulance Services, will be visiting schools in the Harrogate district to talk to children about the dangers of fireworks.

The total number of people treated at hospital accident and emergency departments in the country during the 2003 autumn firework season was 1,136. This is an increase of around 12% on the 2002 figure of 1,017. But it is significantly lower than the overall 2001 figure of 1,362.

The biggest increase in firework related injuries last year came at family or private parties (42%) and there was a large increase (27%) in injuries to adults aged 20 and over. By contrast the number of injuries in the 13-15 age group fell from 167 to 149.

Chief Inspector Chris Chelton of Harrogate Police said: "It is good to know that the number of accidents involving children dropped last year and we want to see that continue this year. We are extremely pleased to have the opportunity to visit our local schools and talk face to face with pupils. Working alongside our colleagues in the other emergency services, we will try to ensure that everyone remains safe over the bonfire period.

"We especially hope that we can reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism by ensuring that everyone is clear about the new legislation relating to fireworks and is fully aware of the effect that the misuse of fireworks has on local communities."

New legislation is introducing a fireworks curfew, banning dangerous air bombs and is putting a greater responsibility on retailers to ensure they are not selling fireworks to under 18s. New requirements are also being imposed on importers to ensure fireworks coming into the country can be properly tracked.

Another initiative will see North Yorkshire's community education out-reach workers out on the streets of Bilton and Starbeck alongside local community beat Bobbies.

Councillor Mike Gardner, Chair of the Harrogate and District Safer Communities Partnership said: "The Police and the Partnership have written to all local retailers of fireworks and asked them to reduce the period during which they will sell fireworks in the hope that this will reduce the number of fireworks on the streets and curtail their misuse and anti-social behaviour.

"We have also been involving local youngsters in this year's safety campaign. They have been helping to deliver posters and booklets on the new legislation around their own streets. They have been very supportive and I'm sure that children will listen to their peers about the very real dangers posed from playing around with fireworks."

One of the Department of Trade and Industry's national information posters is particularly poignant. A smart young man is shown wearing some trendy gear but also some life-long scars gained from messing around with a Roman candle. One of the clear messages the emergency services want to get across is that it is against the law to carry fireworks in public if you are under 18. It is hoped that this message will get through and will also see a reduction in accidents and anti-social behaviour."  
ENDS

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY:** 10.00 am Tuesday, 28 September at Harrogate Fire Station, Skipton Road. Representatives from the three emergency services will be launching their poster and safety campaign.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Councillor Mike Gardner is available for comment on 01423 816774. Further information on the campaign is available from Sergeant Martin Sweeney, Harrogate Police on 505541 Emma Watson at Harrogate Fire Station on 504082 and Peter Mortimer at North Yorkshire's Ambulance Station on 01904 666000 ext 6302.