

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Halloween firecrackers – public safety advisory

Did I just hear fireworks or a gun shot?

Should I call the police?

Burnaby, October 21, 2008: With Halloween fast approaching and the likelihood of firecrackers being discharged in public places, the public may feel concerned about the possibility that what they are hearing might be gunshots but not know what to do about it. The BC Crime Prevention Association offers the following advice:

Police agencies need to be made aware of all such incidents. Don't be worried about being wrong - police are always happy to find out that nothing serious has actually occurred.

"Halloween aside, there is always some reluctance on the part of the public to report what they hear to police, for fear of being wrong or getting involved," points out Valerie MacLean, Executive Director of the BC Crime Prevention Association. "In the days leading up to October 31st, the sound of firecrackers being discharged will only add to the confusion."

Here are some tips for calling 911:

1. Ensure your own personal safety first.
2. Regardless of the perceived source of the noise, make a call to 9-1-1 as soon as possible.
3. Make a mental note of the number of "shots", when and where they were heard.
4. Also make a mental note of any other sounds you may have heard at the same time as the explosions, such as a car screeching away, or people shouting.
5. Stay on the line and listen carefully to all the questions the operator asks you.

Remember that if you are using a cellphone when you make this kind of call, tell the emergency dispatcher where you are calling from as, unlike a landline telephone, this information (subscriber and address) is not automatically available to emergency services for cellular phones. Responding police personnel

will want to speak to you at the scene so it is important that you remain at the scene to offer any further information that will assist the investigation.

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This news release is one of a series in which the BCCPA offers advice under its Crime Shield banner to give the public the tools they need through education and awareness to protect themselves against crime.

Our Ask an Expert column is an additional resource for crime prevention information pertinent to British Columbia. The column can be viewed at www.bccpa.org. Topics will be frequently updated and refreshed depending upon response.

Media Contacts:

Valerie MacLean

Executive Director
BC Crime Prevention Association
604-291-9959, Ext.226
v.macleam@bccpa.org

Jeff Burton

Manager Programs & Projects
BC Crime Prevention Association
604-291-9959, Ext.234
j.burton@bccpa.org