# More than 20 officers sue Police Scotland over lack of protective gear in Bonfire Night riots



Police Scotland is facing legal action from over 20 of its officers, who allege that the force failed to ensure their safety during the violent disturbances of Bonfire Night in both 2023 and 2024. The chaos, particularly severe in the Niddrie area of Edinburgh, saw riot police targeted with fireworks and petrol bombs by around 50 youths, leading to what has been described as unprecedented levels of violence. Eyewitness accounts and video footage illustrate the harrowing scenes as officers donned in riot gear stood defensively while projectiles rained down upon them.

The officers involved are claiming that they were not provided with essential protective gear, particularly ear protection, as they faced a barrage of explosive projectiles for hours during the incident. Reports indicate that more than 30 officers subsequently reported hearing issues, including cases of tinnitus. The Scottish Police Federation, representing the officers, confirmed that roughly 70 were injured in the disturbances, with 21 still experiencing adverse effects from the noise exposure. David Kennedy, the Federation's general secretary, expressed concerns that the lack of appropriate protective equipment could result in long-term hearing loss for some officers.

The background to this legal action is compounded by claims that, despite possessing 10,000 sets of sound suppressors designed to mitigate noise-induced hearing loss, these were not issued to officers amid delays associated with health and safety testing. This negligence raises serious questions about the preparedness of Police Scotland during an operation that was intended to manage potential public disorder effectively. According to accounts, many officers felt vulnerable as they engaged with agitated crowds, amplifying concerns about resource allocation and crisis management.

The Scottish Police Federation has been vocal about the need for better equipment and adequate staffing levels, particularly as no arrests were made during the chaotic events of that night in Niddrie. Kennedy highlighted how the absence of sufficient personnel not only left officers exposed but also enabled ongoing disorder without accountability. This situation mirrors broader issues within policing in Scotland, where resource constraints continue to impact the effectiveness of community policing efforts.

In the wake of these incidents, Police Scotland has acknowledged the seriousness of the officers' claims. Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs, Gold Commander for Operation Moonbeam, reaffirmed the commitment to personnel safety during deployments and indicated that the force would explore the procurement of new equipment aimed at safeguarding frontline officers. However, as legal proceedings unfold, it remains imperative for Police Scotland to address the critical equipment and operational readiness issues that have emerged from these disturbing events.

The implications of this situation extend beyond the immediate legal ramifications, calling into question how adequately prepared police forces are to face public disorder scenarios and, crucially, how they can ensure the safety of their personnel in increasingly volatile environments. With new investigations into the criminal aspects of the Bonfire Night incidents underway, the public and police alike will be watching closely for systemic changes intended to prevent a recurrence of such chaos.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14746269/Police-sued-officers-injured-shameful-rioting-Bonfire-Night.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://news.stv.tv/scotland/officers-to-launch-legal-action-against-police-scotland-following-unprecedented-bonfire-night-violence)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cw4d2v4q2v5o), [[5]](https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/crime/edinburgh-bonfire-night-mayhem-police-officers-to-launch-legal-actions-against-police-scotland-4617810)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2024/november/criminal-investigations-begin-following-bonfire-night-disorder/), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/05/07/police-sue-hearing-damage-bonfire-night-fireworks-edinburgh/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/bonfire-night-no-arrests-at-niddrie-riots-due-to-lack-of-officers-says-top-cop-4399395)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14746269/Police-sued-officers-injured-shameful-rioting-Bonfire-Night.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cw4d2v4q2v5o)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14746269/Police-sued-officers-injured-shameful-rioting-Bonfire-Night.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cw4d2v4q2v5o> - In May 2024, BBC News reported that Police Scotland faced potential legal action from officers injured during Bonfire Night disturbances in Edinburgh. The Scottish Police Federation stated that around 70 officers were injured, with 21 still experiencing hearing problems. The violence involved youths throwing fireworks and petrol bombs at riot police in the Niddrie area. The officers are considering legal claims against the force for failing to provide adequate protective equipment, including ear protection. Police Scotland acknowledged the hearing issues but was unaware of any formal legal proceedings at that time.
3. <https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2024/november/criminal-investigations-begin-following-bonfire-night-disorder/> - Following the Bonfire Night disturbances in November 2023, Police Scotland initiated criminal investigations to identify those responsible. The Niddrie, Calder Road, Gracemount, and Moredun areas of Edinburgh, along with Pollokshields in Glasgow, were notably affected. Officers and other emergency services faced aggression from large groups of youths throwing fireworks and other projectiles. As of November 6, 2023, 19 arrests were made across Scotland in connection with firework offences, with further arrests expected. The public was encouraged to share evidence to assist in the investigations.
4. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/bonfire-night-no-arrests-at-niddrie-riots-due-to-lack-of-officers-says-top-cop-4399395> - In November 2023, The Scotsman reported that no arrests were made during the Bonfire Night riots in Niddrie, Edinburgh, due to insufficient police presence. David Kennedy, general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation, expressed concern over the lack of officers, stating that with more personnel, arrests could have been made. He criticized the operation's outcome, highlighting that officers were injured and no arrests occurred, which was unusual for such public disorder events. The article also touched upon broader issues of police resource constraints and community policing.
5. <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/crime/edinburgh-bonfire-night-mayhem-police-officers-to-launch-legal-actions-against-police-scotland-4617810> - In May 2024, the Edinburgh News reported that police officers who suffered hearing damage during Bonfire Night violence in Edinburgh were preparing to take legal action against Police Scotland. The officers claimed the force failed to provide adequate ear protection, despite having the equipment. The disturbances in the Niddrie area involved fireworks and petrol bombs being thrown at riot police. At least eight officers were physically injured, and a further 34 reported hearing issues. The Scottish Police Federation was working with around 20 affected officers and had sought legal advice.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/05/07/police-sue-hearing-damage-bonfire-night-fireworks-edinburgh/> - The Daily Telegraph reported in May 2024 that police officers in Edinburgh, who had fireworks thrown at them during Bonfire Night violence, were considering suing Police Scotland over hearing damage. Despite the force purchasing around 10,000 sets of ear defenders designed to protect against noise-induced hearing loss, they were not issued to officers due to health and safety rules. At least eight officers were physically injured, and a further 34 reported hearing issues. The Scottish Police Federation was working with around 20 affected officers and had sought legal advice.
7. <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/officers-to-launch-legal-action-against-police-scotland-following-unprecedented-bonfire-night-violence> - STV News reported in May 2024 that officers injured during 'unprecedented' Bonfire Night violence in Edinburgh were set to launch legal action against Police Scotland. They claimed the force failed to provide adequate ear protection, despite having the equipment. The disturbances in the Niddrie area involved fireworks and petrol bombs being thrown at riot police. At least eight officers were physically injured, and a further 34 reported hearing issues. The Scottish Police Federation was working with around 20 affected officers and had sought legal advice.