

Pyrotechnician interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for pyrotechnician roles usually blend a safety and compliance screen with practical and scenario-based questions. Employers want to know you can handle explosives legally, design a show, lead a crew and stay composed when conditions change.

- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about explosives licensing, storage, transport, permits and WHS obligations.
- **Technical and systems:** Questions about firing systems, electrical circuits, choreography software and site setup.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Questions about weather changes, misfires, crowd proximity and emergency response.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Questions about working with crews, emergency services and production teams under deadline.
- **Client and production:** Questions about interpreting a creative brief, budgeting effects and communicating with event producers.

Often a phone or video screen first, then a face-to-face or site-based interview with a technical lead and safety manager. You may be asked to walk through a recent show, complete a written risk assessment or permit scenario, and discuss how you would manage a live firing problem. Some employers include a practical demonstration or supervised site walk.

1. Walk me through how you plan a firework display from the initial brief to the final shot.

Why they ask

This tests whether you understand the full production sequence and can balance creative design with legal and safety requirements.

How to structure your answer

A chronological walk-through: brief, site assessment, design, permits, setup, testing, firing, post-show.

Example answer

"I start by clarifying the brief with the event producer: audience size, site constraints, duration, music cues and budget parameters. Then I do a site visit to check fallout areas, firing positions, power, access and emergency vehicle routes. I design the sequence in Finale 3D, map positions to FireOne or Cobra hardware, and write the risk assessment. Permits go to the local council, police and fire service with site plans and product lists. On site, I set up racks, wire circuits, test continuity and run a full system check. During the show I monitor the firing panel and radio traffic, and after the final shell I conduct a post-show inspection, account for product and debrief with the crew."

2. How do you manage explosives storage and transport to meet Australian requirements?

Why they ask

This is a core compliance question. Employers need confidence that you can keep product secure, legal and documented at every stage.

How to structure your answer

Compliance checklist: licences, magazine storage, segregation, transport documentation, inventory, emergency response.

Example answer

"I hold the relevant state or territory explosives licence and I treat storage and transport as a chain of custody. At the magazine I check segregation, humidity, temperature and security, and I record every product in and out. For transport I use approved containers, placards and documentation under the Australian Dangerous Goods Code, and I brief the driver on routes, emergencies and rendezvous points. If something does not match the paperwork, the load does not move until it is resolved."

3. A shell misfires during a live show. What do you do?

Why they ask

This probes judgement under pressure and your ability to follow emergency procedures while keeping the show and audience safe.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: stop, assess, communicate, follow emergency procedure, decide whether to continue.

Example answer

"A misfire is a stop moment. I pause the sequence, keep the crowd and crew clear, and confirm the position on the firing panel. I radio the safety officer and production manager with a clear status. I follow the site emergency plan: no one approaches the rack until the required waiting period has passed and the area is declared safe. If the show can continue safely from other positions, I will resume with the producer's agreement; if not, I will close the sequence and hand over to emergency services."

4. Tell me about a time you had to solve a problem under time pressure on a show site.

Why they ask

This reveals how you troubleshoot technical faults and communicate with a crew when the schedule is tight.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"On an outdoor concert, we lost power to one firing position during setup. I checked the circuit with a multimeter, found a damaged feeder cable, isolated it and ran a temporary supply from a nearby distro. We tested continuity, documented the change and still made the rehearsal window. Afterwards I added cable protection to the site plan so the same fault was less likely."

5. How do you explain safety constraints to a client who wants a bigger effect closer to the crowd?

Why they ask

This tests client-facing communication and whether you can hold a safety line without shutting down the creative conversation.

How to structure your answer

Client-facing: acknowledge creative goal, explain risk and regulation, offer compliant alternatives, confirm in writing.

Example answer

"I start by understanding what they want the moment to feel like. Then I explain the clearance distances, fallout zones and licensing conditions in plain language, without hiding behind jargon. I offer alternatives: a different product, a higher firing position, a tighter cue sequence or a close-proximity effect that does not need the same exclusion zone. I put the final plan in writing and get sign-off so the whole production team knows what is approved."

6. What firing systems and design software are you comfortable with, and how do you test a system before a show?

Why they ask

This checks your hands-on technical depth and your routine for catching faults before the audience arrives.

How to structure your answer

Technical walk-through with equipment, testing sequence, redundancy.

Example answer

"I regularly use FireOne and Cobra firing systems and design sequences in Finale 3D, with AutoCAD for site plans and rack layouts. Before a show I do a visual inspection of racks, modules and cables, then a continuity test on every channel. I test the backup firing option and confirm power supply and comms. I run a full cue check with the show caller and lighting team, then lock out the system until the clearance is confirmed."