



City of Arts & Innovation

Public Safety Committee Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEMBERS **DATE: OCTOBER 17, 2018**
FROM: FIRE DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**
SUBJECT: ILLEGAL FIREWORKS EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM PLAN UPDATE

ISSUES:

Receive the illegal fireworks education and enforcement plan update and provide input for program improvements and penalties for offenders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Public Safety Committee receive the illegal fireworks education and enforcement plan update and provide input for program improvements and penalties for offenders.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

All fireworks are illegal in the City of Riverside, as discussed in the following sections of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC):

1. RMC Chapter 16.32, Section 16.32.375 Fireworks: The manufacturing, possession, storage, use or handling of fireworks is prohibited in the City of Riverside.
1. RMC Chapter 1.18, Section 1.18.040 Penalties: In addition to any remedy available at law, any person in violation of any provision of this Chapter or Section 16.32.375 of this Code involving 25 pounds or less of fireworks is subject to the issuance of an administrative citation of one-thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) and a disposal fee as set by the state.
2. RMC Chapter 16.32, Section 104.1.1 Citations: The fire code official and his or her designee are authorized to issue a citation to persons operating or maintaining an occupancy, premises, or vehicle subject to this code who allow a hazard to exist or fail to take immediate action to abate a hazard on such occupancy, premises or vehicle when ordered or notified to do so.
3. RMC Chapter 16.32, Section 16.32.080 Assistance from Other Agencies: Police and other enforcement agencies shall have authority to render necessary assistance in the investigation of fires or enforcement when requested to do so.

BACKGROUND:

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), fireworks cause thousands of fires and injuries each year. In an effort to reduce illegal fireworks within the City of Riverside, a multi-departmental Task Force was developed, consisting of the Riverside Fire Department (RFD), Riverside Police Department (RPD) and Code Enforcement Division (Code), to work collaboratively on a public education, outreach and enforcement campaign. The goal of the program is to ensure residents understand that all fireworks are prohibited in Riverside, and that violations may result in an administrative citation and penalty as well as restitution costs for any damages that may result.

On March 21, 2018, the Public Safety Committee met to discuss the illegal fireworks education and enforcement program for 2018 and made a recommendation that City Council approve the program. On May 1, 2018, City Council reviewed and approved the outreach and enforcement activities for the program. At the June 26, 2018 meeting, City Council requested staff bring forth a discussion assessing the current administrative citation penalties and areas to enhance the current program.

DISCUSSION:

Through the task force, the City continues to educate the public on the dangers of fireworks in an attempt to prevent fireworks related injuries, damage to property, and fires, and enforce penalties for willful misconduct. Some efforts for 2018 included the following:

1. **Marketing and Outreach:** RFD, RPD, Code and Riverside TV developed new fireworks Public Safety Announcements (PSA's) in addition to airing previously used PSA's. "Fireworks are Illegal" flyers and posters, in both English and Spanish, were displayed at fire stations, community events and disbursed through the June utility bill. In addition, electronic billboards were showcased on major thoroughfares, and the utilization of all social media platforms (City of Riverside, RFD and RPD), including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube and the City's website.
2. **Mobile Application:** The 3-1-1 application was promoted as an additional method for residents to report illegal firework activity not attributed to immediate threats to life or property. The app also allowed for end users to obtain reports, statistics, pictures and map development.
3. **Increased Staffing:** RFD, RPD and Code increased staffing levels in the days leading up to the 4th of July and the days immediately following to enforce the program. Fire Management staff was also placed in an "on-call" status to support expected incident activity. A total of six Task Forces operationalized in the days leading up to and after the 4th of July to assist with fireworks enforcement.
4. **Penalties:** The administrative citation penalty issued for illegal fireworks is currently \$1,000. In a comparative analysis of similar cities that have an illegal fireworks program, the penalties range depending on the offense.

Despite education and outreach efforts, illegal fireworks remain a serious life safety issue in the City of Riverside. In order to promote community risk reduction throughout the year, all

stakeholders must be involved, support enforcement and mitigation efforts and continue to educate and ensure public safety.

Staff is recommending that the Public Safety Committee receive the illegal fireworks education and enforcement plan update and provide input for program improvements and penalties for offenders.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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