



Public Safety Committee Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE **DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**
FROM: FIRE DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**
SUBJECT: ILLEGAL FIREWORKS EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM PLAN UPDATE

ISSUE:

Review and discuss the illegal fireworks education and enforcement program plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Public Safety Committee review and discuss the illegal fireworks education and enforcement program plan.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

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

1. The manufacturing, possession, storage, use or handling of fireworks is prohibited in the City of Riverside under Section 16.32.100 of the RMC.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 Community and the Economic Development Department's 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 the City of Riverside, and that violations may result in an administrative citation and penalty as well as restitution costs for any damages that may result.

DISCUSSION:

Through the multi-departmental 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.

The 2018 efforts included:

- 1.) **Marketing and Outreach:** RFD, RPD, Code Enforcement 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 application also allowed end-users to obtain reports, statistics, pictures and map development.
- 3.) **Task Force:** A total of six (6) Task Force teams 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.

Additional efforts made for 2019 include:

- 1.) **Press Conference:** Held on June 17th at 11:30 a.m. at City Hall and was streamlined on the City and Fire Department social media accounts.
- 2.) **Increased Staffing:** RFD, RPD and Code Enforcement increased staffing levels on the 4th of July. Fire Management staff was also placed in an "on-call" status to support expected incident activity.
- 3.) **Task Force:** A total of 19 Task Force teams mobilized on the 4th of July to enhance fireworks enforcement throughout the City.

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 discuss the illegal fireworks education and enforcement plan; options for improving the program; and review the current penalties for offenders.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report, but modification or expansion of the program will likely carry some degree of financial impact. The estimated annual costs of the current program are as follows:

Activity	Amount
Prevention	\$3,500
Investigations	3,500
Code Enforcement	5,000
Police Department Response	20,400
Materials	3,700
Utility Bill Inserts	2,000
Total Estimated Costs	\$38,100

Additional costs include Hearing Officers for appealed penalties; the fiscal impact of this activity is dependent upon the volume of appeals.

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