



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: CITY COUNCIL **DATE: AUGUST 18, 2020**

FROM: FIRE DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: ILLEGAL FIREWORKS EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM UPDATES

ISSUES:

Discuss and provide input on the Illegal Fireworks Education and Enforcement Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Discuss the Illegal Fireworks Education and Enforcement Program; and
2. Provide input on the Illegal Fireworks Education and Enforcement Program in 2021.

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), in 2019, the US responded to 19,500 fires and 9,000 injuries mostly to legs, hands, and eyes. Additionally, sparklers account for one-fourth of annual fireworks injuries.

In order 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 known as the Illegal Fireworks Education and Enforcement Program (Program). The goal of the Program is to ensure no injuries occur, local and surrounding residents understand that all fireworks are prohibited in Riverside and that violations would result in an administrative citation and penalty as well as restitution costs for any damages that may occur.

The Programs operational plan for planning and enforcement changed this year due to COVID-19 restrictions and regulations. The City Council decided to cancel both the Mt. Rubidoux and the La Sierra fireworks shows due to County guidelines advising that no social gatherings should take place during this time. The Fireworks Committee met to discuss updated changes to the Program to ensure safety measures were established among community members. This year the City officials agreed upon additional fireworks enforcement options by deploying more task forces leading up to and on the 4th of July.

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 additional efforts made for 2020 included the following:

1. **Press Conference:** Held on June 17th at 11:30 a.m. at City Hall and was streamlined on our social media accounts.
2. **Enforcement Activities:** RPD and Fire sent out and hand delivered (33) warning letters of known fireworks use locations, to advise that fireworks were illegal and there will be a \$1,000 fine if caught using, selling and/or possessing them. RPD, RFD and Code Enforcement staffed Task Forces on June 19th, 20th, 26th, 27th and July 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th.
3. **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 and operating local businesses. Electronic billboards were also showcased on major thoroughfares, and all social media platforms were utilized (City of Riverside, RFD and RPD), including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and the City's website.
4. **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 end users to obtain reports, statistics, pictures and map development. Additionally, an email tree group was created for afterhours so task forces could attempt to respond to specific addresses using illegal fireworks.

5. **Increased Staffing:** RFD, RPD and Code increased task force levels during the weekends leading up to July 4th, and during July 1st - 4th. Fire Management staff along with two additional fire apparatus were also placed in an “on-call” status to support increased incident activity. A total of 27 Task Force teams operationalized on July 4th 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. All stakeholders must be involved, support enforcement and mitigation efforts, continue to educate, and ensure public safety to promote community risk reduction throughout the year.

Staff is recommending that the City Council discuss the Illegal Fireworks Education and Enforcement Program and options for improving the program for 2021.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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| Prepared by: | Michael D. Moore, Fire Chief |
| Certified as to | |
| availability of funds: | Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer |
| Approved by: | Lea Deesing, Assistant City Manager |
| Approved as to form: | Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney |

Attachment: Presentation