



Safety, Wellness and Youth Committee

TO: SAFETY, WELLENSS, AND YOUTH COMMITTEE DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2024

FROM: FIRE DEPARTMENT WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: AFTER ACTION FOR FIREWORKS ACTIVITIES FOR JULY 4, 2024, AND RECOMMENDATION TO USE sUAS (DRONE) TECHNOLOGY TO ASSIST WITH FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT AND AMEND AND UPDATE THE RIVERSIDE MUNICIPAL CODE 1.18 (RMC) FOR FIREWORKS TO INCLUDE SOCIAL HOST LIABILITY.

ISSUE:

Receive and update on the Fire Department, Police Department, and Code Enforcement efforts to reduce the use of illegal fireworks for the 2024 Fourth of July holiday and receive recommendation for drone fireworks enforcement and the amendment to update the RMC to include Social Host Liability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee:

1. Receive an update on fireworks enforcement activities for 2024; and
2. Receive a recommendation to use sUAS Technology use for fireworks enforcement; and
3. Receive a recommendation to amend RMC 1.18 to include a Social Host Liability
4. Forward update to the City Council.

BACKGROUND:

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2023, reported Emergency rooms treated over nine thousand and seven hundred (9,700) injuries related to Fireworks and eight (8) deaths. To reduce illegal fireworks activity within the city, the Riverside Fire Department (RFD), Police Department (RPD), and Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD) / Code Enforcement Division are working collaboratively on a fireworks education and enforcement campaign. The campaign's goal is to ensure that residents understand that all fireworks are prohibited in Riverside and that violation may result in administrative citations as well as restitution costs for any damages that may result.

The following municipal codes apply to fireworks:

1. The manufacturing, possession, storage, use or handling of fireworks is prohibited in the

City of Riverside under Section 16.32.370 Section 5601.1.1 of the Riverside Municipal Code (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 five hundred dollars (\$1,500) 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 the authority to render necessary assistance in the investigation of fires or enforcement when requested to do so.

DISCUSSION:

A. Fireworks Update for 2024:

The lead personnel for the fireworks task force were Fire Captain Mendoza, Police Sergeant Elliot, and Code Enforcement Manager Gary Merk. Abatement activities for this year focused on public education, prevention, and enforcement. Specific actions taken to promote a safe Fourth of July included:

1. Riverside Office of Communications, Riverside Fire Department, and the Riverside Police Department provided fireworks Public Safety Announcements (PSAs), aired throughout June and July.
2. The electronic billboards at the Auto Mall near Adams and the 91 Freeway, and the Marketplace at Mission Inn Avenue and the 91 Freeway featured the “No Fireworks” message beginning in June.
3. RFD and RPD used social media outlets to identify fireworks sales activity.
4. The fine for illegal fireworks was increased by the City Council to \$1,500. RFD, RPD, and Code Enforcement partnered to enforce fireworks violations.
5. RFD, Code Enforcement, and RPD increased staffing from June 29 – July 4, 2024. RFD overstaffed eight (8) fire apparatus to stand-by at the Mt. Rubidoux and (1) at the La Sierra fireworks shows on July 4, 2024.
6. Fire management staff were on duty and on-call for emergencies. Three battalion chiefs were on duty for July 4, and four additional chief officers were on-call and available to respond if needed.
7. All fourteen (14) Fire stations are directed to maintain a visible presence during July 4th, 2024, festivities to enforce RMC 16.31.100 and to educate the public on the danger associated with fireworks.

- 8. Five (5) to seven (7) Task Force groups were active nightly.
- 9. Response and Citation totals between Fire and Code for June 30, 2024, and July 4, 2024:

Total Radio Calls	Total On-View	Total 311 Calls	Total Citations Issued	Total Fireworks Seized	Total Collected from Citations
344	99	87	24	1,800 pounds	\$3,645

Citation Summary:

- Twenty-four (24) citations sent to finance.
- No citations have been sent to collections.
- Four (4) citations have been paid for in full.
- 20 citations outstanding between Finance and Code Enforcement

Citation Ward Breakdown:

Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Ward 6	Ward 7
4	0	2	1	2	5	10

Fire Incidents on July 4, 2024:

The City of Riverside Fire Department responded to one (1) structure fire, thirteen (13) vegetation fires, one (1) vehicle fire, and one (1) trash fire.

Illegal Fireworks Summary

Despite education and outreach efforts, illegal fireworks remain a severe life safety issue and impacts emergency services in the City of Riverside. To promote community risk reduction throughout the year, all stakeholders must continue to be involved, support enforcement, and mitigation efforts and continue to educate and ensure public safety.

B. sUAS Technology for Fireworks Enforcement:

The Riverside Fire Department (RFD) and the Riverside Police Department (RPD) would like to recommend enhancements to the City of Riverside's efforts to enforce RMC 1.18, including the use of sUAS technology for fireworks enforcement.

1. Fireworks Enforcement:

The week leading up to and on July 4th, utilizing certified pilots to conduct flights in areas known to have high incidences of illegal fireworks. Use them to lawfully monitor and video record such activity to establish a nexus between the unlawful activity and specific residences/individuals whenever possible. Generate written reports detailing our observations and work with the City Attorney's Office (CAO) to issue administrative citations based on the observations and evidence.

2. Personnel Needs:

The RFD and RPD recommend assigning a drone team to each ward to maximize the impact and responsiveness to the community. A drone team consists of two officers or firefighters (one as the drone pilot and one as the visual observer/safety officer). Due to the challenges of operating in the nighttime environment and the inherent dangers associated with operating drones around/near airborne explosive projectiles, sUAS pilots would be required to attend an advanced (3) day course focusing exclusively on nighttime operations would be needed. The course cost is \$30,000.00, and the personal cost is estimated at \$121,168.00.

3. Equipment Needs:

Based on the number of available drones and their existing capabilities, RPD would not be able to accomplish these goals with our current fleet. Four (4) new DJI M30 drones would need to be purchased for RPD to ensure effective operational teams. The additional drones would cost \$57,106.93.

C. Riverside Municipal Code 1.18 Update:

The CAO will amend and draft language to the RMC 1.18 to provide a section for Social Host Liability. In summary, the Ordinance will include that it is unlawful for any social host to allow, by invitation or consent the use of fireworks, and to hold the parent or guardians of juveniles liable when found to violate RMC 1.18.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

Items contributing to the Strategic Priority No. 2 Community Well-Being and Goal No. 2.6 - Strengthen community preparedness for emergencies to ensure effective response and recovery.

1. **Community Trust** – Providing enforcement during the July 4 Holiday keeps our community safe and ensures community trust between the City of Riverside and its residents.
2. **Equity** – Enforcement is provided in all Wards of the City to keep all communities within the City of Riverside safe.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Fiscal responsibility is at the forefront during the planning and implementation process for all services provided during the July 4 holiday.
4. **Innovation** – The City of Riverside team uses all tools available to keep the community educated, informed, and safe during the July 4 holiday.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The City of Riverside dedicates sufficient resources to sustain the needed resources to adequately enforce and keep citizens safe during the July 4 holiday.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no immediate fiscal impact related to this report. However, based on the recommendations of the Committee, there may be additional funding requests that may be brought forward to Council for approval. Should the enhancements listed below be recommended

by the Committee, there may be a fiscal impact of up to \$207,274.93.

RPD has presented some enhancements as an option to increase the effectiveness of fireworks enforcement and training as seen below and outlined in the report:

- sUAS Enhancements: Total cost for RPD to enhance the equipment and training to safely and adequately provide enforcement with sUAS capabilities is \$207,274.93. This includes the estimated \$121,168.00 for personnel, \$56,106.93 for equipment, and \$30,000 for the nighttime operations course.

For reference, below are the historical costs that were incurred during the July 2024 costs related to enforcement of fireworks-related activities.

- 2024 fireworks enforcement cost is \$72,860. Funds were included in the operating budgets that were adopted by Council. The breakdown of the costs is illustrated in the table below.

Code Enforcement	Police Department	Fire Department
\$11,255	\$45,074	\$16,531

Prepared by: Jeff DeLaurie, Deputy Fire Chief
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 Certified as to availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/ Assistant Chief Financial Officer
 Approved by: Mike Futrell, City Manager
 Approved as to form: Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Redline Ordinance – Use of Drone Technology and Social Host Liability
2. Presentation