



Legislation Text

File #: 18-0544, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to receive and file a presentation on the status of illegal fireworks outreach, education, and enforcement plans for the Fourth of July holiday. (Citywide)

Historically, the Fourth of July holiday is the busiest day of the year for the Long Beach Fire and Police Departments. The City of Long Beach's (City) primary public safety mission is to ensure that residents and visitors celebrate the holiday safely in our City. Thousands of people are expected to visit the City's beaches and parks for the holiday, and ensuring a safe environment to celebrate is a high priority.

The Fire and Police Departments started planning and preparing for the holiday several months ago. As in previous years, public outreach and enforcement will remain the primary focus areas to ensure a safe Fourth of July. Outreach and education efforts have been designed to communicate the message to residents and visitors that all fireworks, including those marked "Safe and Sane," are dangerous, and illegal in the City. The National Fire Protection Administration reports a national annual average of 18,500 fires caused by fireworks, including 1,300 structure fires, 300 vehicle fires, and 16,900 outside and other fires. Nationwide, these fires cause an average of 3 deaths, 40 civilian injuries, and \$43 million in direct property damage. In 2015, hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 11,900 people for fireworks-related injuries. Children under 15 years of age accounted for 35 percent of the estimated injuries.

The Fire Department is working with all City departments to coordinate public service announcements, press releases, and the distribution of educational materials in English, Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog, communicating that all fireworks are dangerous and illegal in the City. Messages are delivered through a variety of media outlets and platforms, including social media, the City's website, and Nextdoor. Announcements are also being displayed in highly-visible locations, such as parks and libraries. Other outreach efforts include posting on electronic marquee signs, flyers, banners, posters, and the distribution of over 200 lawn signs. Educational information was distributed to

Long Beach schools, and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers, and Lifeguards will begin distributing flyers to residents, businesses, and neighborhood associations next week. Representatives from the Fire Department will speak at community events and block parties about the illegality and dangers of all fireworks, and "Fireworks are Illegal" magnets are now displayed on Fire Department apparatus. Additionally, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine's Animal Control Bureau is distributing educational materials to the community, advising pet owners of ways to mitigate the impacts of fireworks on their pets. The Police Department is also disseminating information regarding

fireworks enforcement activities via news releases, social media, and distribution by patrol personnel.

The Office of Special Events and Filming continues to coordinate all block party requests. Block party organizers must sign a permit stating they are aware of all regulations, which include: (1) block parties must end at 7:00 p.m.; (2) all fireworks are illegal; and, (3) block party participants will comply with all applicable City, county, state, and federal laws. Block party organizers are further notified that failure to comply with all permit conditions may result in the revocation of the block party permit and any future permits, and could be subject to additional City fees. Block party information is shared with the Department of Public Works, which coordinates street closures for the affected areas.

Between July 1 and July 5, 2017, the Communications Center received over 1,200 fireworks-related calls. Due to the nature of the complaints, Fire and Police patrols were either unable to locate the vast majority of incidents, or the suspect fled the scene prior to their arrival. Last year, enforcement efforts resulted in 45 felony arrests, 46 fireworks and misdemeanor citations, and the seizure of over 7,000 pounds of illegal fireworks. Additionally, the Fire Department responded to two fires and one injury that were directly related to fireworks.

This year, in an effort to respond to increased reports of illegal fireworks on the nights of July 1 through July 5, the Fire Department will deploy two additional patrol vehicles, each staffed with two Arson Investigators. These additional units will work in conjunction with the Police Department's proactive patrols. Patrols will continue to target areas of the City historically known for frequent use of fireworks, as well as respond to reports of illegal fireworks activity Citywide. Anyone cited or arrested for fireworks violations may be issued a \$1,000 fine, sentenced to jail for up to six months, or both. The fines and penalties may increase depending on the fireworks' classification. Fireworks may be voluntarily disposed of at collection bins, which are located at all Fire and Police stations, and at Lifeguard Headquarters. In addition to the above measures, the Fire Department is working with the City Prosecutor to develop processes to help public safety staff to better identify users of illegal fireworks.

The above measures are being implemented to encourage the Long Beach community to have a safe Fourth of July holiday. Residents and visitors who wish to view fireworks are encouraged to attend professional fireworks displays at Alamitos Bay on July 3 and/or at the Queen Mary on July 4.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Linda T. Vu and by Budget Analysis Officer Julissa Jose-Murray on June 15, 2018.

City Council action is requested on June 19, 2018, in preparation for the Fourth of July holiday.

There is no fiscal or local job impact associated with this recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

MICHAEL A. DUREE
FIRE CHIEF

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CHIEF OF POLICE

APPROVED:

PATRICK H. WEST
CITY MANAGER