





CITY OF LAWNDALE

14717 BURIN AVENUE, LAWNDALE, CALIFORNIA 90260
PHONE (310) 973-3200 ♦ www.lawndalecity.org

DATE: June 6, 2023
TO: Sean M. Moore, City Manager 
FROM: Michael Reyes, Director of Municipal Services
SUBJECT: **Updated Illegal Fireworks Suppression Plan for 2023** 

BACKGROUND

The City of Lawndale, like many municipalities is challenged in the days and months before and after the July 4th holiday with an onslaught of illegal fireworks usage which create noise and air pollution, health and safety issues, and a general disturbance for the community. While the City Council wishes to continue the use and sales of legal, safe and sane fireworks, they have also expressed their strong desire to limit the amount of illegal fireworks being used each year, and authorized stringent enforcement against those causing such disturbances in the community.

STAFF REVIEW

In 2021, staff launched its first Illegal Fireworks Suppression Plan which included several concepts for stopping the sale and use of illegal fireworks during the July 4th holiday season. Now in its third year, Staff has learned many lessons from the prior two years, both in terms of things that worked well, and things that were not so successful. This report is to inform the City Council of Staff's recommendations for the 2023 Illegal Fireworks Suppression Plan for this July 4th holiday season including the implementation of changes learned from the previous two years.

LASD PRESENCE

SAO Deputies

- The four Special Assignment Officers (SAO's) assigned to the City are currently scheduled to work morning to afternoon shifts seven days a week. The first two-man SAO crew is scheduled to work Sunday - Wednesday, and the second SAO crew from Wednesday - Saturday.
- For this year's Illegal Fireworks Suppression detail, all four SAO deputies will begin their shifts at 1600 hours (4:00 PM) and work until 0200 hours (2:00 AM) starting Saturday, July 1st, 2023. Adjusting their shifts will position them to observe more illegal fireworks violations which typically occur in the evening and early morning hours. This is a departure from the 2021 Illegal Fireworks Suppression Plan in which SAO's shifted their schedules eight weeks ahead of the July 4th holiday. This lengthier time frame took SAO's away from their regular daylight patrol duties in favor of fireworks suppression, but yielded only two citations, indicating this extended schedule change was not optimal.

Updated Illegal Fireworks Suppression Plan for 2023

- From Saturday, July 1st through Tuesday, July 4th, all four SAO deputies will work the same shift (1600 – 0200 hours) so that the City can have the largest deputy presence during the anticipated heaviest period of illegal firework usage.

Additional Deputies

- In addition to the four SAO deputies, six overtime deputies will be added to work the same days (July 1st - July 4th, 1800 - 0200 hours), but with slightly shorter shifts for a total of 10 deputies dedicated to illegal fireworks suppression, per day.
- These overtime deputies will be working as two man teams in undercover rental cars provided by the City, which will allow deputies to observe violating parties in the act of lighting illegal fireworks much easier than in marked black and white cruisers.

Sheriff's Department Enforcement Plan

- Deputies will make contact with violating parties who are observed in possession of illegal fireworks and issue Administrative Citations provided by the City. Illegal fireworks will also be confiscated by the deputies.
- Deputies will be provided with a list of addresses where illegal fireworks were observed and cited from 2021 and 2022. Administrative citations issued to first time offenders will begin at \$2500 per citation.
- When deputies observe illegal fireworks emanating from places where physical barriers exist which prevent the deputies from seeing the violating party, such as fences and backyard walls, deputies will begin to fill out an Administrative Citation with as much information as they can provide, such as address of property, time of incident, and include any photographic evidence that they can gather, along with a brief narrative on the front of the citation describing their observation. These partially completed citations will then be submitted to Municipal Services Department staff who will then use the information provided by deputies to issue a citation to the property owner from information available in the City's Citizen Serve program the next day.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Staff also plans to increase awareness within the community advising of the restrictions and penalties associated with the use and sale of illegal fireworks, through the following steps:

- Heavy rotation on the City's social media sites, cable TV channel, and City website advising of increased presence by deputies in undercover vehicles, and the issuance of Administrative Citations to property owners for allowing illegal fireworks to be used on their property.
- Two message trailers will be deployed on Hawthorne Boulevard displaying the current fine amounts as well as a banner spanning Hawthorne Boulevard advising that illegal fireworks are prohibited.

Updated Illegal Fireworks Suppression Plan for 2023

- Signs will also be added on major streets (Hawthorne Blvd, Prairie Ave., Marine Ave., Manhattan Beach Blvd., etc.) in high visibility areas, so residents driving past can be aware of the increased citations amounts and restrictions against illegal fireworks.
- Permanent metal signs have been placed by Public Works staff on several streets and in neighborhoods where a high concentration of illegal fireworks have been used in the past. These new signs replace the older signs and reflect the increase in the bail amount for illegal fireworks usage.

NEW ENFORCEMENT TECHNIQUES

This year, Lawndale staff will assist deputies by patrolling in unmarked cars looking for violators using illegal fireworks. Two person teams will patrol the City in unmarked cars, and travel through City streets, recording people engaged in illegal fireworks usage. Staff will not contact violating parties, but they will issue citations based on the information documented and observed, with citations being mailed to the property owners.

FISCAL IMPACT

City staff expects projected costs of \$32,000 to include overtime pay for additional deputies and City personnel, rental car costs for deputies and City employees to use over a period of several days, and additional costs for advertising the City's suppression plan and enforcement. Staff hopes to offset costs for this detail through the issuance of citations to violating parties who light and possess illegal fireworks.