

City of Costa Mesa Police Department

Memorandum



DATE: July 12, 2016

TO: Robert Sharpnack, Chief of Police
Mark Manley, Captain
Greg Scott, Lieutenant
Joyce LaPointe, Lieutenant

FROM: David Casarez, Sergeant

RE: **4th of July After-Action Report for 2016**

The following is the After-Action Report for the deployment of Public Safety and City resources for the five-day period from July 1st through July 5th, 2016. The stated goals of the Police Department's operational plan were to maximize the Police Department's ability to effectively handle prioritized emergency calls-for-service and routine calls-for-service (CFS) leading up to and through the 4th of July. In addition, the operational plan was intended to provide a highly visible and proactive approach to illegal fireworks enforcement and an enhanced customer service response for the anticipated increase in holiday related CFS.

The Fire Department partnered with the Police Department on all fronts, including community outreach, public education, social media, and operational enhancements. Specifically, the Fire Department increased staffing between July 2nd and July 4th, and utilized teams of Arson Investigators to provide additional enforcement patrols throughout the city during those days. The Finance and Public Services Department also played important supportive roles in preparing for the holiday weekend, as noted below. Finally, the City CEO's Office and the City Council provided the necessary financial resources to support substantial outreach efforts that served the City's clearly stated position on safety within the community.

Public Education / Community Outreach / Social Media

Considerable efforts were made to inform and educate the general public of the City's fireworks-related policies leading up to July 4th. On June 29th, June 30th, July 2nd, and July 3rd, Police Explorers and advisors, two police bicycle officers, the Fire Department engine company in the area and Battalion Chief, as well as several CERT Volunteers, canvassed and distributed informational 4th of July fliers in "hot spot" neighborhoods throughout the city previously known to have higher numbers of illegal firework CFS. Approximately 3,000 door hanger fliers were ordered for distribution. The door hangers were printed in both English and Spanish. They included language advising of a "zero tolerance" policy, the identification of illegal fireworks, hours to discharge "safe and sane" fireworks, a 24-hour Police Department contact phone number to report illegal firework use or suspicious activity, and the declaration of possession and/or use of illegal fireworks being a crime being punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine and/or imprisonment. This message was also placed on 16 x 20 posters which were placed at every firework

stand. In addition, informational flyers were distributed at firework stands and posted on the Newport-Mesa Unified School District website.

Moreover, this year, City Council authorized a citywide mass distribution of letters to approximately 44,000 residential households emphasizing a “zero tolerance” approach to illegal fireworks and being a good neighbor on July 4th. The letter was printed in both English and Spanish and was authored by Police Chief Robert Sharpnack and Fire Chief Dan Stefano, on behalf of the City.

Approximately 22,000 4th of July informational fliers were sent out to households via the Mesa Water District billing cycle in June.

Social Media – including Nixle, the City’s webpage, and the respective CMPD and CMFD Facebook pages, were utilized extensively to inform the public of the City’s stance on illegal firework usage and enforcement, thereof. Additionally, electronic LED message boards were placed strategically throughout the city advising the same, to include a new partnership with the Orange County Fairgrounds and Costa Mesa and Estancia High Schools to broadcast the City’s firework safety message on their respective message boards.

The City’s LED message boards were placed at the following locations:

- Southbound Newport Blvd, north of Mesa Dr
- Southbound Fairview Rd, north of Adams Ave
- Northbound Newport Blvd, north of 19th St
- Northbound Harbor Blvd, south of Victoria St
- Eastbound Adams Ave, west of Placentia/Mesa Verde Drive East
- Eastbound Victoria St, west of Canyon Dr

Additionally, a Public Service Announcement (PSA) was completed by CMTV featuring Police Chief Robert Sharpnack and Fire Chief Dan Stefano. The PSA was posted on the Police Department’s Facebook page, as well as the City of Costa Mesa website. The web link is listed below.

<http://www.costamesaca.gov/index.aspx?page=1909>

Police Department Staffing & Deployment

Police Department patrol staffing remained at normal levels June 30th, July 1st and July 5th. In order to manage the anticipated increase in CFS leading up to and through July 4th, normal patrol staffing was augmented with additional firework Directed Enforcement teams July 2nd through July 4th.

The enhanced staffing was achieved through utilization of voluntary overtime on Saturday, July 2nd and Sunday, July 3rd. This was done in order to manage the anticipated Saturday and Sunday workload needs. Throughout this time period, officers assigned to the firework Directed Enforcement teams were tasked specifically with firework-related CFS and proactive “hot spot” patrols and enforcement.

This was the second year Police Department management implemented mandatory staffing for July 4th where off-duty personnel were drafted and assigned to work ten-hour shifts during peak firework enforcement hours. This allowed the Directed Enforcement teams to work independently of normal

patrol field operations, yet be available to assist patrol officers if a major incident occurred. Directed Enforcement teams were assigned to each of the two Police Department geographic patrol areas. Directed Enforcement strategies included uniformed officers in marked police vehicles, uniformed officers in unmarked vehicles, uniformed Fire Department Arson Investigators in unmarked vehicles, and other uniformed officers dedicated to alcohol and traffic management priorities, e.g. accident investigation and DUI enforcement.

Supplemental firework Directed Enforcement teams worked the following schedules:

- Saturday, July 2nd 1600-0200 hours
- Sunday, July 3rd 1600-0200 hours
- Monday, July 4th 1400-0200 hours

Supplemental firework Directed Enforcement resources (does *not* include patrol staffing):

Saturday, July 2nd

- Four units comprised of two police officers each
- One unit comprised of three Arson Investigators
- Four Park Rangers

Sunday, July 3rd

- Four units comprised of two police officers each
- One unit comprised of two Arson Investigators
- Two Park Rangers

Monday, July 4th

- One marked unit comprised of a police sergeant and fire captain
- Six marked units comprised of two police officers each
- One unmarked unit comprised of an officer and police captain
- Two unmarked units comprised of two uniformed officers each
- Three unmarked units comprised of two Arson Investigators each
- Three traffic officers
- Two motor traffic officers
- Four Park Rangers

Enforcement Strategies

The civil citation and criminal citation processes were utilized for the enforcement of firework-related violations of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC) and state Health & Safety Code. Violations of the CMMC resulted in the issuance of civil citations and an incremental sliding fine schedule starting at \$150.00 and going up to \$1,000. This year, the administrative hearing dates for civil citations were not provided on the civil citations. Instead, City Hall will schedule administrative hearing dates and notify offenders via mail with the date to be heard on their citation.

Police Department Calls-For-Service (CFS)

For the evaluation period of July 1st through July 5th, the Communications Bureau received 857 firework-related CFS that were dispatched through general broadcast to area police units (540 in 2015). Officers

were dispatched and responded to an additional 152 firework-related CFS (131 in 2015). There were a total of 1009 firework-related CFS over the five-day period. This workload does not include normal CFS pertaining to life, property and quality of life issues that were dispatched during this same time period.

The firework-related CFS workload leading up to July 4th was moderate with a dramatic increase on July 4th. CFS on July 4th generally peaked between 1900 hours and midnight.

From 2015 to 2016, CFS increased in all categories.

The following table reflects a four-year historical summary of CFS and citations for the 4th of July holiday deployment period:

Calls-for-Service (CFS)	2013	2014	2015	2016	% Change from 2015 to 2016
Firework GBs	430	428	540	857	58.7%
Officer Response	127	89	131	152	16.0%
Total Firework Calls	504	517	671	1009	50.3%
Citations / Arrests	32/3*	35/0	25/2*	79/0	216.0%
Evaluation Period	6 days	6 days	5 days	5 days	--

* These numbers are only indicative of fireworks related arrests. They do not account for other patrol, traffic, or any other non-firework related arrests.

There were 42 “hot spot” locations identified for the 4th of July holiday. On July 4th, officers patrolled and issued 28.6% of the total citations in these “hot spot” areas.

Fire Department Calls for Service (CFS)

Battalion Chief Kevin Diamond was the liaison and Branch Director for the Fire Department. On July 2nd, Battalion Chief Diamond and another CMFD Arson Investigator patrolled the city in an unmarked vehicle. They provided technical expertise and supplemented Directed Enforcement staffing. Between July 1st and July 5th, the Fire Department conducted three arson investigations of firework-related trash can/dumpster fires.

Fire Department Calls-for-Service (CFS)	2014	2015	2016	% Change 2015 to 2016
July 1 st	35	39	38	-2.6%
July 2 nd	21	43	42	-2.3%
July 3 rd	29	35	43	+22.9%
July 4 th	42	56	40	-28.6%
July 5 th	41	41	30	-26.8%
Total Calls	168	214	193	-9.8%

Fire Department total CFS during the period of July 1st through July 5th was 193, which included a total of three firework-related trash/dumpster fires.

Noteworthy Events / Enforcement by Day

These events were handled solely by officers assigned to the firework Directed Enforcement teams.

Saturday, July 2nd

- Officers issued two alcohol-related citations and three moving violations
- Officers issue seven firework CMMC civil citations for discharging dangerous fireworks
- Officers contacted one parolee and twelve transients

Sunday, July 3rd

- Officers made one DUI arrest
- Officers issued one traffic citation and four alcohol-related citations
- Officers issued eight CMMC firework-related civil citations
- Officers contacted three transients and one active participant of a local criminal street gang
- An improvised “Piccolo Pete” plastic bottle bomb was discovered. OCSD Bomb squad responded and took custody of the item for destruction
- Approximately 50 lbs. of confiscated illegal fireworks were collected from July 1st through July 3rd

Monday, July 4th

- Officers made one warrant arrest
- Officers made one drug-related arrest
- Officers made one DUI arrest
- Officers and Arson Investigators collectively issued 63 firework-related CMMC civil citations
- Officers contacted two transients
- An improvised “Piccolo Pete” plastic bottle bomb was found in the parking lot of College Park School. OCSD bomb squad responded and took possession of the item for destruction
- Approximately 150 lbs. of confiscated illegal fireworks were collected on July 4th

A total of approximately 200 pounds of illegal fireworks were confiscated throughout the 4th of July holiday period. A total of 79 civil citations were issued for firework-related violations of the CMMC.

City Parks / Permitted Block Parties

There were no noteworthy firework-related issues within public parks or with the six permitted block parties. They had no adverse impact on City resources. On July 4th, Park Rangers issued 47 parking tickets for violation of CMMC 12-26, vehicle in the park after dark. This was largely due to people using park parking lots for off-site parking for 4th of July events.

Communications / Logistics / Equipment

All Police Department personnel utilized the Communication Bureau’s “Green 1” police radio frequency. Due to current staffing challenges in the Communications Bureau, an alternate Directed Enforcement specific radio frequency was not possible. In the future, where feasible, a dedicated radio frequency and Communications personnel for firework-specific CFS would be ideal. Communications Bureau personnel performed admirably handling the increased and fast-paced workload of radio activity and requests from officers.

The newest generation lithium batteries for the mobile radios eliminated the need for requesting or acquiring extra mobile radio batteries from OSCD Control 1. There were no issues noted in regards to the mobile radio communications.

No vehicle issues were noted, as most Directed Enforcement personnel were doubled up in a single vehicle for efficiency and safety.

Animal Control

The following information is for animal impounds during the 4th of July holiday period:

- July 1st – One cat impounded
- July 2nd – Three dogs; two cats impounded
- July 3rd – Two cats impounded
- July 4th – No animals impounded
- July 5th – Two dogs; one cat impounded

Finance Department

The Finance Department issues firework stand permits every year to qualified applicants in accordance with City Ordinance and City Council Policy 400-2. For the week of the 4th of July holiday, the Finance Department issued 36 permits to eligible applicants; the same number of permits issued for the 2015 holiday. The permit fees were waived pursuant to Council Policy 400-2. Permits were only issued to groups that were approved for firework stands in 2012 and have continued to apply through 2016. No permits were issued to new groups.

Public Services

Public Services staff placed firework prohibition signs at all entrances to City facilities and at all public parks. This contributed to the absence of any noteworthy firework issues on any City property or in any of our public parks. Streets were swept after July 4th with no added costs. Fireworks companies also assisted with some cleanup. Public Services material and personnel costs for temporary signage at public parks and along main thoroughfare streets was approximately \$3,415.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future deployments:

- Continue with all of the previously outlined public outreach efforts.
- PSA to be completed and broadcast during City Council meeting prior to July 4th.
- Consider an early, coordinated investigative efforts to root out supply of illegal fireworks sales coming into the city.
- Dedicated alternate radio frequency and Communications personnel for fireworks-related CFS.
- Continued partnership with all City departments.
- In addition to supplemental firework Directed Enforcement personnel, consider adding traffic officer coverage throughout the holiday period.
- Consider increased supervisory oversight dedicated solely to the Directed Enforcement each day.
- Continue to be flexible and modify strategic deployment approach as necessary, e.g. large showing of personnel for unruly crowds.

Conclusion

Illegal fireworks were a persistent issue throughout the city leading up to and magnified on July 4th. Police Department executive staff received several concerned emails/phone calls from the community regarding the volume of illegal fireworks being discharged. The Police Department's Facebook page

received a number of similar comments. The above recommendations should provide a foundation for next year's strategic plan.

This was the second year Police Department management implemented mandatory staffing to provide additional, necessary coverage during the 4th of July holiday deployment period. With the significant increase in firework-related CFS over a five-day period, this deployment was able to provide enhanced customer service, not only for Directed Enforcement objectives, but also for the overall Police Department mission during the prescribed time frame. The Fire Department added substantial resources with a team of Arson Investigators who worked in an enforcement capacity. Contributions from the City Council, CEO's Office, Public Services and Finance Departments added collectively to the overall success of the City's 4th of July operations.