

City of Costa Mesa Police Department

Memorandum



DATE: July 17, 2018

TO: Chief Robert N. Sharpnack
Captain Mark Manley
Lieutenant Joyce LaPointe
Lieutenant Paul Beckman

FROM: Sergeant Jason Chamness

RE: **Fourth of July After-Action Report for 2018**

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, 2018. The stated goals of the Police Department's operational plan were to maximize the Police Department's ability to effectively handle routine and emergency calls-for-service (CFS) through the Fourth of July holiday. 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 Fourth of July holiday related CFS.

The Fire Department partnered with the Police Department on many fronts, including community outreach, public education, social media, and operational enhancements. The Fire Department allocated one Battalion Chief (arson investigator) specifically to firework enforcement on July 4th. The City Attorney's Office, Finance and Public Services Departments all played important roles in preparing for the holiday, as noted later in this report. Finally, the City Manager's Office and the City Council provided the support and vision to carry out 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 July 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, Fire Department volunteers (28), Police Explorers and advisors (18), police bicycle officers (3), and a Fire Department engine company (1), canvassed and distributed informational Fourth of July fliers within "hot spot" neighborhoods previously known to have a higher volume of illegal firework CFS. There were 20 "hot spot" neighborhoods in total. Approximately 4,300 bilingual door hanger fliers were distributed. The door hangers were printed in both English and Spanish. They included language advising of the City's "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 a declaration stating possession and/or use of illegal fireworks is a crime punishable up to a \$1,000 fine and/or imprisonment. Informational fliers were distributed at firework stands and posted on the Newport-Mesa Unified School District website.

Approximately 18,500 informational firework fliers were sent out to households via the Mesa Water District's billing cycle in June. Approximately 300 fliers were sent to the Senior Center and the Balearic

Center offices. Approximately 20 oversized posters were provided to larger apartment complexes on Paularino Street, Meyer Street and Pomona Street. Each fireworks booth received four posters, totaling 148 posters. The City's Parks & Recreation newsletter contained a half-page informational advertisement that was sent out to every household.

Social Media – including Instagram, Twitter, Nixle, Nextdoor, the City's webpage, as well as the respective CMPD and CMFD Facebook pages – were all utilized extensively to inform the public of the City's stance on illegal firework usage and enforcement.

Also, electronic LED message boards were placed strategically throughout the city along major thoroughfares advising the same. LED message boards were placed at the following locations:

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

Lastly, a Public Service Announcement (PSA) featuring Police Chief Sharpnack and Fire Chief Stefano was used to educate the public of the City's stance on illegal firework usage and enforcement. The PSA was posted on a variety of City, Police and Fire Department social media pages and websites. 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 on July 1st and July 5th. In order to manage the anticipated increase in CFS leading up to July 4th, patrol staffing was augmented with additional firework Directed Enforcement teams from July 2nd through July 4th.

Enhanced staffing was achieved through utilization of voluntary Directed Enforcement overtime on Monday, July 2nd, and 3/12 shift officers working their monthly non-overtime "payback" day on Tuesday, July 3rd, and Wednesday, July 4th. Throughout this period, officers assigned to the firework Directed Enforcement teams were tasked specifically with firework-related CFS and proactive high-visibility patrol in and around "hot spot" neighborhoods.

Furthermore, on July 4th, officers from the 4/10 Day and AM shifts volunteered to work five-hour overtime shifts during peak firework enforcement hours before or after their regular shift. This was the second year where a dedicated Communications Bureau dispatcher was utilized to allow for more efficient radio communication between Directed Enforcement teams and the Communications Bureau. Directed Enforcement teams worked independently of patrol operations, yet were 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 both marked and unmarked police vehicles.

Supplemental firework Directed Enforcement teams worked the following schedules:

- Monday, July 2nd 1700-2200 hours
- Tuesday, July 3rd 1600-0200 hours
- Wednesday, July 4th 1600-0200 hours, with additional Directed Enforcement personnel staffing between 1700 – 2200 hours. Two teams comprised mostly of CPU Officers worked between the hours of 1200-2200 hours.

Below is a breakdown of supplemental firework Directed Enforcement personnel (does *not* include regular Patrol or other field staffing):

Monday, July 2nd

- Three marked units with two Police officers each
- One marked unit with a Sergeant
- Two Park Rangers

Tuesday, July 3rd

- Three marked units with two Police Officers each
- Two marked units with two Sergeants
- Four CPU Officers working bike detail assisting Explorers
- Two Park Rangers

Wednesday, July 4th

- One marked unit with a Police Sergeant (Incident Commander) and a CMFD Battalion Chief
- Two marked units with two Police Sergeants
- Six unmarked units with two uniformed Police Officers each
- Six marked units with two uniformed Police Officers each
- Three Park Rangers

Enforcement Strategies

The Costa Mesa Police Department utilized the criminal citation process for enforcement of firework-related violations of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC). In all cases, violators were cited and released in the field for the applicable misdemeanor charges and were issued a court date to appear at the Orange County Superior Court, West Justice Center, in Westminster. Prior to the Fourth of July holiday, the Police Department collaborated with the City Attorney's Office to work closer in the prosecution of these cases. All CMMC citations were sent to the City Attorney for review and prosecution.

This was the second year the Police Department utilized undercover detectives from the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) to conduct preemptive operations ahead of the holiday period. Investigative operations were conducted for several weeks leading up to July 4th, and netted a total of 14 arrests. In doing so, SIU seized approximately 1,300 pounds of illegal fireworks.

Police Department Calls-For-Service (CFS)

For the evaluation period of July 1st through July 5th, the Communications Bureau received a total of 565 firework-related CFS over the five-day period (703 in 2017). Of those, 466 firework-related CFS were

dispatched through general broadcast to area police units (545 in 2017). Further, officers responded to 99 firework-related CFS (158 in 2017). The firework-related CFS workload leading up to July 4th was moderate with a significant increase on July 4th. CFS on July 4th generally peaked between 2000 hours and 2300 hours. This firework-related workload was in addition to the normal, non-firework CFS during this same period.

The following table reflects a five-year historical summary of CFS and citations/arrests for the Fourth of July holiday deployment period:

Police Department Calls-for-Service (CFS)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change from 2017 to 2018
Firework General Broadcast CFS	428	540	857	545	466	- 14.5%
CFS Requiring Contact w/Officer	89	131	152	158	99	- 37.3%
Total Firework CFS	517	671	1009	703	565	- 19.6%
Citations / Arrests	35/0	25/2*	79/0	80**	55	-31.3%
Evaluation Period	6 days	5 days	5 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.

** In 2017, the use of non-criminal, civil citations was discontinued. All offenders were arrested for criminal violations and released in the field with a written citation. Previous years reported both civil citations and arrests.

There were 20 “hot spot” locations identified from the previous 2017 Fourth of July holiday. In 2018, approximately 25% of the total arrests/citations occurred within these target “hot spot” locations. This was a 15% increase from the year before and demonstrates a focused effort to decrease complaints in the identified neighborhoods.

Fire Department Calls for Service (CFS)

Battalion Chief Tim Vasin was the liaison and Branch Director for the Fire Department. On July 4th, Battalion Chief Vasin and Police Sergeant Jason Chamness patrolled the City in a marked police vehicle. The on-duty Battalion Chief patrolled the city in a marked fire department vehicle, made six contacts for usage of illegal fireworks, and assisted with three citations. The Assistant Fire Marshall and a member from Community Risk Reduction conducted safety inspections on July 4th, including the fireworks display at the Mesa Verde Country Club.

The Fire Department responded to 186 total CFS during the period of July 1st through July 5th. On July 4th, the department responded to 64 total calls for service including 3 structure fires, 7 dumpster fires, and 1 small bush fire, all caused by legal and illegal fireworks.

The following table reflects a five-year historical summary of CFS received by the Fire Department over the Fourth of July holiday period:

Fire Department Calls-for-Service (CFS)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2017 to 2018
July 1 st	35	39	38	30	25	- 16%
July 2 nd	21	43	42	38	36	- 5%
July 3 rd	29	35	43	41	32	- 22%
July 4 th	42	56	40	33	64	+ 94%
July 5 th	41	41	30	41	29	- 29%
Total CFS	168	214	193	183	186	- 1%

Noteworthy Events / Directed Enforcement by Day

These events were handled solely by uniformed officers assigned to Directed Enforcement teams and does not include those arrests made during the previously stated undercover operations:

Monday, July 2nd

- Officers made no firework-related arrests
- Officers made one warrant arrest
- Officers made one arrest for unlicensed driver

Tuesday, July 3rd

- Officers made one firework-related arrest
- Officers made six drug related arrests
- Officers made one public intoxication arrest
- Officers made one arrest for Vehicle Code violations

Wednesday, July 4th

- Officers made 40 firework-related arrests
- Officers made one drug related arrest
- Officers made two arrests for CMMC violations

The Police Department made a total of 55 arrests for misdemeanor firework-related violations of the California Health & Safety Code and the Costa Mesa Municipal Code. This included arrests made by SIU. In most cases, violators were cited and released in the field for the applicable misdemeanor charges.

City Parks / Permitted Block Parties

There were no noteworthy firework-related issues within public parks. Park Rangers conducted numerous patrol checks of public parks and issued four citations for violations unrelated to fireworks.

There were a total of 9 permitted block parties. Two particular permitted block parties in the 300 and 400 blocks of Broadway Street required an above average police response to manage issues associated with alcohol intoxication and illegal fireworks. Two citations were written during these responses.

Communications / Logistics / Equipment

This year, an alternative Communications Bureau police radio frequency for Directed Enforcement operations was not utilized. All Directed Enforcement personnel utilized the Communication Bureau's primary Green 1 police radio frequency. There was, however, a dedicated Communications dispatcher for the Directed Enforcement units. This approach worked well and did not hinder regular patrol operations.

No vehicle inventory issues were noted. All Directed Enforcement personnel were paired up in a single vehicle for efficiency and officer safety. There were no safety equipment issues.

Animal Control

The following is animal impound information during the Fourth of July holiday period:

- July 1st – One cat impounded
- July 2nd – Two dogs impounded
- July 3rd – One dog impounded
- July 4th – Two dogs impounded
- July 5th – One dog and one cat impounded

Some of these impounds were found pets that likely escaped their home due to the discharge of fireworks.

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 period of the Fourth of July holiday, the Finance Department issued 35 permits to eligible applicants. The same number of permits were also issued for the 2017 holiday. The permit fees were waived pursuant to Council Policy 400-2.

Public Services

Public Services staff manufactured and 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 public parks. Areas of heavy firework debris were swept after July 4th with no added costs. Fireworks companies also assisted with some of the cleanup. Public Services material and personnel costs for temporary signage at public parks and along main thoroughfare streets was approximately \$3,500.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future deployments:

- Continue to use the misdemeanor criminal citation/arrest for firework violations.
- Utilize the newly developed CAD/RMS "Firework" Crystal Report to synthesize CFS data in preparation of next year's deployment.
- Use the above-mentioned tool to assist in the review of permit block party applications with an eye on previous year's illegal firework activity prior to issuing permits.
- Deploy an equal amount of marked and unmarked units. Unmarked units were highly effective and were able to get closer to violators before detection.

- Consider if the safe deployment of bicycle officers within “hot spots” neighborhoods is a feasible option.
- Per State Fire Code, ensure firework stands provide informational fliers to each patron that outlines laws pertaining to the use of purchased fireworks.
- Continue with all of the previously outlined public outreach efforts.
- Consider broadcasting the Fourth of July PSA video during City Council meetings starting in early June.
- Continue with early, coordinated investigative efforts to root out supply of illegal fireworks coming into the city. Liaison with nearby allied agencies to increase regional effectiveness, if feasible.
- Continue to use dedicated Communications personnel for Directed Enforcement fireworks-related CFS.

Conclusion

With the predictable and progressive increase in CFS over the five-day period, the operational plan was able to provide staffing reflective of the challenge. City sponsored educational campaigns; proactive enforcement efforts, including undercover operations to mitigate the flow of illegal fireworks into the city; increased Police Department staffing over the Fourth of July holiday; and, the continued collaboration among City departments resulted in a net *decrease* in overall firework-related CFS, year-to-date. This was the second year in a row that firework-related CFS decreased. This reduction was consistent with conversations staff members had with several community members, as well as comments posted to the Police Department’s Nextdoor.com page noting decreased discharge of illegal fireworks in several neighborhoods.

Furthermore, the Fire Department’s allocation of a Battalion Chief (arson investigator) and collection of confiscated fireworks for disposal with the Orange County Sheriff’s Bomb Squad provided essential resources that advanced the operational plan’s effectiveness. Support from the City Council, City Manager’s Office, and all other City departments, contributed to the over success of this year’s citywide Fourth of July operations.