Police Department
LARRY V. GONZALEZ
Chief of Police

City of Riverside
PATRICIA LOCK DAWSON
Mayor

Fire Department
STEVE MCKINSTER
Fire Chief

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 20, 2025

SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS TO HELP CRACK DOWN ON ILLEGAL FIREWORKS

RIVERSIDE, CA – As the 4th of July approaches, the City of Riverside is reminding residents that all fireworks are illegal within the city limits, including those labeled "safe and sane." This year, with the memory of last summer's Hawarden Fire still fresh, the City is taking a stronger stance to prevent fires, injuries, and property damage with community education, stiffer fines, sophisticated technology-driven enforcement efforts, and a clear message: Illegal fireworks are not worth the risk.

With the support of amended Riverside Municipal Code sections 1.18.010, 1.18.020, and 1.18.040, small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) will be deployed to help police, fire, and code enforcement teams detect, record, and document violations from the air. The City Council also increased the fine to $1,500 per violation.

Last summer's Hawarden Fire, the largest in Riverside's history, was ignited by illegal fireworks, burning 500+ acres and destroying multiple homes.

"We saw first-hand last summer how fireworks can cause catastrophic property damage," Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said. "Be smart – don't shoot off fireworks. The risk to lives and property is real, and the consequences for getting caught just aren't worth it."

This year, multiple sUAS operators will deploy in neighborhoods throughout the city. The camera technology on these sUAS's allows authorities to more accurately pinpoint where illegal fireworks originate. Under the City's social hosting rule (1.18.040 RMC), property owners can be held responsible if illegal fireworks are set off at their residence, even if they didn't light them.

"Fireworks are dangerous to our community and also cause distress for our neighbors, our veterans with PTSD and our pets," said City Councilmember Jim Perry, who advocated for more aggressive enforcement. "The Hawarden Fire is the biggest example of how destructive fireworks can be, but all our neighborhoods suffer when illegal fireworks are set off in our city. This year, multiple drone operators will be deployed in our neighborhoods to hold property owners accountable for the fireworks activity taking place on their property."

Residents are encouraged to report fireworks through the following channels:

- Utilize the Riverside 311 mobile app
- Call the Riverside 311 Call Center at (951) 826-5311
- Report through the Riverside 311 website at https://crmweb.riversideca.gov.
- Reporting illegal fireworks can also be made anonymously

Celebrate safely by attending the City's free fireworks shows at Mount Rubidoux and La Sierra Park on Friday, July 4, 2025, at 9 p.m. Don't miss this spectacular celebration!

"This is an easy choice to make – risk severe financial impacts from shooting off fireworks, or enjoy a professional fireworks show while relaxing with your neighbors," Mayor Pro Tem Sean Mill said. "I encourage all Riversiders to make the responsible decision."

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Mount Rubidoux is located at 4706 Mt. Rubidoux Street. La Sierra Park is located at 5215 La Sierra Avenue.

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