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City of Riverside
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Fire Department
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Fire Chief

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 10, 2025

ILLEGAL FIREWORKS CRACKDOWN RESULTS IN OVER 60 CITATIONS

RIVERSIDE, CA – A collaborative effort between Riverside Police, Riverside Fire, and the City's Code Enforcement Division resulted in 65 administrative citations for illegal fireworks, each carrying a \$1,500 fine.

With the support of amended Riverside Municipal Code sections 1.18.010, 1.18.020, and 1.18.040, small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) were used in the days leading up to and on July 4th to assist police, fire, and code enforcement teams in detecting, recording, and documenting illegal fireworks violations from the air. Five enforcement teams were positioned throughout the city, focusing on areas with a history of high illegal fireworks activity, as well as locations identified through dispatch calls and 311 Call Center complaints.

When a sUAS recorded a violation, teams collected video evidence to pinpoint the property of origin. Before issuing a citation, each case was carefully verified by the sUAS operator, visual observer, code enforcement officer, and often additional police and fire personnel.

From June 27th to July 4th, the City of Riverside's Public Safety Communications Center received 547 calls for service related to fireworks, up from 477 in 2024. The 311 Call Center also saw an increase, with 431 complaints compared to 307 last year. To avoid overwhelming public safety dispatchers, residents have been encouraged to report illegal fireworks through the 311 mobile app, online, or by phone.

Last summer's Hawarden Fire, the largest in Riverside's history, was started by illegal fireworks. The recent Mandalay Fire in Riverside is suspected to have been ignited by illegal fireworks,

which burned over 83 acres of wildland near Tyler Street and Jurupa Avenue, leading to numerous home evacuations.

"Illegal fireworks, especially commercial-grade aerial types, pose a serious threat to public safety," said Riverside Fire Chief Steve McKinster. "They're more than loud nuisances; they can cause devastating fires and life-changing injuries, putting homes, property, and lives at risk every year."

"Drone technology is a vital tool in cracking down on illegal fireworks, and we will continue to use it," said Riverside Police Chief Larry Gonzalez. "It allows us to safely identify violations, collect evidence, and hold offenders accountable, without putting officers or firefighters at risk."

The City of Riverside remains committed to keeping the community safe through proactive enforcement, public education, and continued use of small Unmanned Aerial Systems. Fireworks are illegal within city limits year-round, and violators will be held accountable. To report illegal fireworks, use the 311 app, visit the City's website, or call 311.

For Media Use: Click on the following link for violations captured by the small Unmanned Aerial Systems on the Fourth of July - <https://youtu.be/lvOc-eXwEs4>

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