Fire Inspectors Take to the Streets to Reduce Illegal Fireworks

Doug Strosnider, Chief of Community Risk Reduction

Before the holiday, Murrieta Fire & Rescue launched a public education campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of illegal fireworks. Beginning two weeks before the Fourth of July, the campaign included social media messaging, community signage, and educational displays on Community Risk Reduction Division vehicles.

Building on this early outreach, our educational efforts continued in person as the holiday approached. The Community Risk Reduction Division began engaging residents on the evening of Thursday, July 2, expanded those efforts on Friday, July 3, and worked alongside the Murrieta Police Department as additional enforcement teams were deployed to address illegal fireworks activity.

On Saturday, July 4, Community Risk Reduction personnel began their day early, patrolling neighborhoods throughout the city to identify gatherings and educate residents about California's fireworks laws and the City's local ordinance prohibiting all fireworks. Staff distributed educational materials and beverage koozies, creating positive opportunities to engage with residents and reinforce the message that no fireworks of any type are permitted within the City of Murrieta.

The Fourth of July was extremely busy, with emergency calls being dispatched continuously throughout the evening and well into the night. As call volume increased, two Community Risk Reduction staff members partnered together in each vehicle to enhance their safety and improve response capabilities while continuing neighborhood patrols.

Unfortunately, illegal fireworks activity was widespread throughout the city. The greatest concern continues to be aerial fireworks, which launch into the air before exploding overhead. These devices present a significant wildfire risk and can cause serious injuries, particularly during periods of hot, dry weather.

Throughout the holiday, Murrieta Fire & Rescue worked closely with the Murrieta Police Department to educate the public and support enforcement efforts. Fortunately, our community made it through another Fourth of July without a major wildfire or catastrophic incident. We appreciate the Police Department's continued commitment to enforcement. As one patrol sergeant summarized their approach, illegal fireworks enforcement is handled much like DUI enforcement—there are no warnings.

The overwhelming majority of individuals who use illegal fireworks understand they are breaking the law. Choosing to use them anyway places neighbors, first responders, homes, businesses, and the City's open spaces at unnecessary risk. While we are grateful that the holiday concluded without a major incident, the volume of illegal fireworks observed demonstrates that this remains a significant community challenge. Continued public education, proactive enforcement, and personal responsibility will remain critical to protecting the lives, property, and natural resources of Murrieta.