



NEWS ADVISORY

June 29, 2016

For immediate release

CITY PLANS FIREWORKS LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR FIRE PREVENTION AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The use of most fireworks in the city of Missoula is illegal, and City leaders ask for cooperation from citizens to help keep Missoula safe during the Independence Day holiday.

The Missoula City Council and Mayor John Engen hear complaints from residents every year and ask for enforcement and protection from the Police and Fire departments to the extent of their resources. Fireworks start fires, endangering property in town and bringing the risk of wildland fires. They cause injuries and are part of hospital emergency departments' busiest day of the year. They cause many dogs to become frightened, lost and injured, creating Missoula Animal Control's busiest day of the year and extra demands on the shelter at the Humane Society of Western Montana. And they frighten and disturb people.

"I have constituent comments every year, telling me to let the police and mayor know that they want the fireworks ordinance enforced," Missoula City Council President Marilyn Marler said. "When I speak up about suppressing fireworks in the city limits, I feel confident it's what most people want."

"Fireworks are especially disruptive and upsetting for some of our neighbors," Councilman Jordan Hess said. "Some war veterans are especially sensitive to the noise of explosions. Celebrating Independence Day in another way, without the noise of fireworks, is thoughtful of our neighbors."

Fireworks are prohibited on City open space lands, all U.S. Forest Service lands, within County parks and County-managed recreation areas and at all Fish, Wildlife and Parks fishing access sites.

Police officers will enforce fireworks laws with extra officers working on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The Police Department's full traffic unit will also work Monday, along with officers who

have special assignment to fireworks complaints. The Fireworks Report Line, operated by the emergency dispatchers at the city-county Office of Emergency Management's Missoula 9-1-1 Center, is working 24 hours a day through the holiday period, June 28 through July 5. **To report violations, call 258-4850.** Officers will respond to as many complaints as possible.

The Missoula Fire Department will staff two additional engines during the holiday weekend on July 2, 3 and 4 from 6 p.m. to midnight. Firefighters as well as police officers have the authority to issue citations. The penalties are \$100 plus court costs for a first offense and \$300 plus court costs for a second offense during the same calendar year as the first offense.

The Missoula City Council amended the fireworks ordinance in fall of 2013 to allow the sale and discharge of "novelty" fireworks in the city. Those include sparklers, party poppers and other small fireworks. Visit the City website for a complete description:

<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/1763/Fireworks>

Fireworks are illegal in City parks, and they are prohibited in County parks. Fort Missoula Regional Park, under construction south of South Avenue and west of Reserve Street, is now inside the city.

Professional public displays, which are allowed by permit from the Missoula Fire Department chief, are done safely at pre-determined times and are short in duration. **This year, the only public fireworks show will be at the civic stadium on Friday, July 1, after the Osprey game. There will be no show at Southgate Mall.**

The City of Missoula Communications office is distributing information through advertising in the Missoulian newspaper in the print and online editions; radio advertising on-air and online; information on the City website; City social media; and news coverage. Missoula Fire Department staff members are posting information on legal novelty fireworks and the City ordinance at fireworks stands in the area.

For interviews, contact:

Travis Welsh, public information officer, Missoula Police Department, 552-6290

Ginny Merriam, communications director, City of Missoula, 552-6007

Dax Fraser, assistant fire marshal, Missoula Fire Department, 552-6210

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Ginny Merriam, Public Information/Communications Director, 552-6007 office; 546-7692 cell