



NEWS ADVISORY

June 25, 2015

For immediate release

CITY PLANS FIREWORKS LAW ENFORCEMENT, ASKS FOR CITIZEN COOPERATION

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 in a period of extremely dry and hot weather 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've had constituent comments this 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."

The public safety threat carries extra importance this year, with record high temperatures and dry conditions expected. Fire danger is officially rated as Very High. Fireworks are illegal in City parks, and they are prohibited in County parks.

Police officers will enforce the ordinance banning fireworks in the city. Chief Mike Brady and department leaders have shifted some day-shift patrol officers to mid-shift on July 3 and 4, and officers will respond to as many complaints as possible. 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 29 through July 5. **To report violations, call 258-4850.**

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>

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. Public displays in Missoula will be held on June 26 and July 3 at the civic stadium after the Osprey baseball games and on July 4 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:

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