City of Salinas Fireworks Enforcement Operations – After Action Report

August 20

2024

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EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Examples:

AAR	After Action Report
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch
COS	City of Salinas
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
SFD	Salinas Fire Department
SPD	Salinas Police Department
SCE	Salinas Code Enforcement
SPW	Salinas Public Works
OCA	Office of the City Attorney
ECD	Emergency Communications Department
IAP	Incident Action Plan
IC	Incident Command
ICP	Incident Command Post
ICS	Incident Command System
NGEN	Next Generation Emergency Network
RP	Reporting Party

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the various strategies used to enforce current laws and ordinances respective of illegal fireworks in the City of Salinas and will serve to highlight the relative successes and areas for improvement for future operations.

Focus:

☑ Prevention / public outreach

☑ Enforcement of illegal activity

☑ Incident Response / mitigation

Classification:

☑ Unclassified

☐ For Official Use Only (FOUO)

☐ By Invitation Only

Operation, Activity or Scenario:

☑ Fire

☑ Law Enforcement Action

☐ Severe Weather

☐ Hazardous Material Release

☐ Bomb Threat

☐ Medical Emergency

☐ Evacuation

☐ Lockdown

☐ Special Event

☐ Exercise/Drill

☐ Other

Statistical information for this report was collected from CAD records, and the various reporting platforms for the period of June 1, 2024 through July 12, 2024.

AFTER ACTION REPORT OVERVIEW

This report is a compilation of information from the different departments and staff who participated in the enforcement operations and public outreach campaigns. The information was gathered by the Salinas Fire Department (SFD), the Salinas Police Department (SPD), Salinas Public Works Department (SPW), Monterey County Emergency Communications Department (ECD), and other City staff.

The overall strategy for the public outreach campaign and enforcement plan was a collaborative effort on behalf of the SFD Prevention Division and other City departments, in collaboration with the City Council Fireworks Sub-Committee.

The recommendations in this AAR should be viewed with considerable attention to the needs for a safe and livable community. In some cases, departments may determine that the benefits of implementation are insufficient to outweigh cost or pose a considerable safety risk for staff or the public. In other cases, departments may identify alternative solutions that are more effective. However, each department should review the recommendations and determine the most appropriate action and time needed for implementation.

The issues addressed in this AAR should be reviewed and thoroughly examined for the appropriation of needed resources to ensure the functions of incident response, stabilization and enforcement are safe, efficient, and effective.

Operational Overview:

Starting on June 1st, a multi-media campaign was launched to increase involvement from residents in the reporting of illegal fireworks use. Building on the positive outcome realized in 2018 and 2019, large signs were again placed at key intersections throughout the city promoting the various methods of reporting illegal fireworks use. This was further publicized in a broad social media campaign, print press, and broadcast news outlets. A detailed statistical analysis is attached.

This campaign proved ongoing success in routing complaints received through the www.salinasfireworks.com website, the "Salinas Connect" application, as well as the voicemail and text tip line.

Fireworks

The Fire Prevention Office plays a pivotal role in overseeing various aspects of fire safety, including the regulation of fireworks activities. Through meticulous monitoring, the office ensures compliance with regulations governing the operation of fireworks lottery stands, verifying that only approved vendors sell "safe and sane" fireworks in designated areas. Additionally, the office diligently reviews fireworks citations issued by enforcement teams, assessing the effectiveness of enforcement measures and identifying areas for improvement. Moreover, the Fire Prevention Office prioritizes fire safety education and awareness campaigns, providing valuable resources and guidance to the community to mitigate fire risks associated with fireworks usage. By vigilantly supervising these critical components—fireworks lottery stands, citations, and fire safety—the office fosters a safer environment for all residents, promoting responsible firework practices and reducing the potential for fire-related incidents.

Fireworks Lottery Stands +

Fireworks Citations +

Fireworks Safety +

Report Fireworks –

Based on the lessons learned from the previous fireworks seasons in 2020 through 2023, undercover patrols, along with marked vehicles, were deployed on the holiday to corroborate citizen tips from the Salinas Connect app, salinasfireworks.com website, voicemail, and text reports.

All members of the 2024 Fireworks Enforcement Task Force coordinated with one another via telecommunication related means, resources patrolled areas where increased activity was evident and collected evidence to support the issuance of administrative citations after the fact.

Citizen participation in reporting illegal fireworks slightly increased as compared to last year. This increase can be attributed to multiple factors including success of our campaign, inflation across many sectors like fuel and fireworks, and the holiday falling on a Thursday. The "Salinas Connect"

application served as the primary repository for all illegal fireworks reports and residents could upload pictures and video evidence to support the reports.

ADMINISTRATIVE CITATIONS

For the period of June 1st through July 12th, the total number of Administrative Citations referred to the Office of City Attorney was 118.

Administrative fines remained unchanged from the previous year at $1,250 for the "Use, Possession, or Sale of Illegal Fireworks" and $250 for the "Noise Violation" totaling a minimum citation of $1,500.

In some cases, multiple fines were assessed where illegal activity was documented over several days. The highest single citation amount was $22,500.

Disputed citations are managed and heard in accordance with the City of Salinas Municipal Code. The Fire Prevention Division coordinates the Administrative Hearing process with the necessary parties.

Statistical Information:

Duration: June 1st – July 12th, 2024

Funding Sources

	2023	2024	% Change
"Safe & Sane" retail fireworks booth application fees:	$7,513	$7,933	5.59%
"Safe & Sane" fireworks retail sales surcharges (7% of gross):	*$71,400	*$51,115	28.41%
Illegal fireworks fines collected through Administrative Citations:	$55,517	$58,126	4.70%
Total Estimated Revenue	**$134,430**	**$117,174**	**$17,256**

* Information as provided by wholesalers TNT and Phantom Fireworks.

Enforcement and Education Expenses

	2023	2024	% Change/Difference
City Staff Overtime:	$10,123	$16,628	64% - $6,505
Drone Equipment:	$0.00	$14,996	NA - $14,996
Video Equipment:	$0.00	$1,100	NA - $1,100
Outside Services:	$8,720	$12,561	44% - $3,841
Vehicle Rental:	$1,153	$1,411	22% - $258
Sign Printing:	$3,500	$0.00	100% - $3,500
Total Expenses:	**$23,496**	**$46,696**	**98% - $23,200**

FIREWORKS SALES AND SURCHARGE

Loc #	GROUPS (12)	NET SALES	RETAIL SALES (On Form)	7% SURCHG
CNR0001	Alisal HS Booster Club	$28,530	$57,060	$3,994
CNR0002	Everett Alvarez Athletic Booster Club	$24,758	$49,516	$3,466
CNR0003	Salinas City Virtual Academy	$26,993	$53,986	$3,779
CNR0006	Rancho San Juan HS Booster Club	$22,015	$44,030	$3,082
CNR0008	Sherwood School	$30,863	$61,726	$4,321
CNR0011	Madonna Del Sasso School	$31,829	$63,658	$4,456
CNR0012	CJ's Sport Academy	$19,811	$39,622	$2,774
CNR0013	Salinas Rotary Club Alisal	$17,653	$35,306	$2,471
CNR0014	Dance Arts Boosters INC	$21,392	$42,784	$2,995
CNR0015	Palma High School	$39,069	$78,138	$5,470
CNR0019	North Salinas HS Booster Club	$36,361	$72,722	$5,091
CNR0026	SHS Athletic Booster Club	$19,450	$38,900	$2,723
	TOTALS	**$318,724**	**$637,448**	**$34,061**

Acct Name	2024 Net Sales	2024 Retail Sales	7% Surcharge
Confidence Pregnancy Center	$17,200.21	$34,400.42	$2,408.03
The Epicenter	$10,394.34	$20,788.68	$1,455.21
Family & Faith Ministries of CA	$22,660.47	$45,320.94	$3,172.47
Lincoln Elementary School PTO	$19,437.22	$38,874.44	$2,721.21
Mt. Toro High School	$35,686.75	$71,373.50	$4,996.15
Oasis Charter Public School	$16,431.73	$32,863.46	$2,300.44
		Total	$17,053.51

Salinas Fire Department Operations

During this period in 2024, SFD responded to nearly 2,176 emergency incidents. A breakdown of the fire incidents with previous years' data is provided as follows:

	2022	2023	2024
Structure Fires:	56	15	13
Vegetation Fires:	40	62	61
Misc. Fire (Dumpsters, etc.):	38	18	60
Totals:	**134**	**95**	**134**

For the 4th of July holiday period, SFD's staffing consisted of 2 members of Fire Administration, 6 members of Fire Prevention, 6 SFD Drone Pilots, and additional city staff to respond to increased calls for service and patrol the target threat areas.

The Salinas Police Department provided 1 Commander, 1 Sergeant and 6 undercover officers.

9 additional city employees from assisted with illegal fireworks patrols. Those departments included: Community Development, City Clerk's Office, City Manager's Office, and Information Systems.

Salinas Fire responded to numerous calls for service on 4th of July to include 2 structure fires, 8 vegetation fires, 34 medical emergencies, 3 vehicle accidents, and numerous other calls.

STRENGTHS

- Adequate funding from existing fees, surcharges, and fines.
- Participation from the City employees alleviated the excessive burden of limited SFD and SPD resources.
- Comprehensive media coverage including ad campaigns on all platforms such as television, radio, social media, and signs.
- Citizen-based tips from the "neighborhood approach" using Salinas Connect and fireworks hotline.
- Undercover operations to "observe and report" led to Administrative Citations with better evidentiary documentation.
- Integration of the Salinas Connect reporting platform provided detailed information for follow-up.
- Additional signage was placed at high visibility areas and intersections of the city.
- Advance warnings sent to addresses where illegal fireworks were reported last year helped to deter activity in certain areas.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- Collection and sorting of data from various sources of intelligence remains a manual process and is labor intensive.
- Manual review of video evidence is also time consuming and delays issuance of Administrative Citations and pulls staff from normal job functions.
- Means of collecting accurate evidence.
- More real time integration between tips and enforcement, starting in June.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase utilization of Drone Teams (SPD and SFD) on future July 4th Holidays.
- Continue to utilize additional city employees, willing to observe, report and collect evidence.
- Increase sharing of regional resources to target illegal fireworks sales.
- Increase publicity of undercover activity and citation statistics in traditional and social media.
- Continue attempts to engage neighborhood groups and citizens in "observe and report" roles.
- Consider a "reward" system for tips leading to successful citation of individuals and property owners where illegal fireworks are used. Rewards could be funded with successfully collected fines.
- Work with community groups to establish a community-based organized fireworks display to discourage "at-home" use of illegal fireworks.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Continued collaborative efforts in this years' campaign proved to be a positive influence toward curbing illegal fireworks use in the City of Salinas. The goal of these programs continues to focus on changing social consciousness at the individual and neighborhood level. It should be acknowledged that this is an ongoing process over several years but marked decreases in activity were noted this year.

The improvement in the quality of citizen reports is a positive indicator of the success of these efforts. The increase in citations with actionable evidence is another product of better collaboration between City departments in a coordinated fashion.

Future years' plans will build on these successes and the Council Fireworks Subcommittee and City staff will remain engaged with constituents to discuss and implement recommendations to bring about a social change and improve the quality of life for the residents of Salinas.

IMPROVEMENT PLANNING MATRIX

IMPROVEMENT PLANNING MATRIX

Area of Improvement		Improvement Action	Responsible Party/Areas	Targeted Completion Date	Status
1)	**Neighborhood Involvement**	Solicit more participation in outreach and volunteer patrol	Council/Community Safety Div.	4/2022	Ongoing
2)	**Limited Patrol Staffing**	Increase staffing where possible	SFD/SPD/SCED	7/2022	Ongoing
3)	**Integration with "Salinas Connect"**	Further refine automated responses and reports	Administration Div./SFD Prevention Div.	5/2019	100% complete
4)	**Data Collection and Sorting**	Staff collaboration to merge data sources	Administrative Div./SFD Prevention	6/2019	100% complete
	Multi-Unit Dwelling Enforcement	Identify better methods for citations of individuals	SFD/City Attorney/ SPD/SCE/ Council FW Subcommittee	1/2022	Ongoing
5)	**Limited Administrative Support**	Identify existing staff resources to assist	SFD/Administrative Div./FW Sub-Committee/ SCE/ City Attorney	10/2022	In-process