



# City of Oceanside

300 North Coast Highway,  
Oceanside, California 92054

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 26-1189

**Agenda Date:** 1/28/2026

**Agenda #:** 15.

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**DATE:** January 28, 2026

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers

**FROM:** Fire Department

**TITLE:** **REPORT ON POTENTIAL MEASURES FOR ABATEMENT OF ILLEGAL FIREWORKS**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the City Council receive a report on potential measures for abatement of illegal fireworks and provide direction to prepare a formal administrative abatement program and implementing ordinance.

### **BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

On August 20, 2025, the City Council directed staff to explore enforcement strategies to address the proliferation of illegal fireworks within the City, similar to programs recently adopted by other California jurisdictions. This report provides an informational update on the collaborative efforts of the Oceanside Fire Department, Oceanside Police Department, and the City Attorney's Office, and seeks City Council direction regarding the scope and structure of a proposed mitigation program consisting of an administrative enforcement model, including tiered penalties, response cost recovery, and defined notice and appeal procedures, to supplement existing criminal enforcement. The goal is to enhance deterrence, reduce fire risk, and provide a clear, consistent enforcement structure for high-impact fireworks activity during peak periods such as Independence Day and New Year's Eve

This report includes the following components:

- Analysis of fireworks-related calls for service,
- Research into enforcement programs in other jurisdictions, and
- Development of proposed enhanced measures to abate illegal fireworks.

Illegal fireworks activity in Oceanside poses significant public health and safety risks, contributes to noise disturbances, air pollution and litter, and places increased demand on public safety resources. Historically, reports of illegal fireworks activity increase substantially during the Independence Day holiday period and to a lesser extent, New Year's Eve. Similar to the experiences of several other California cities, traditional enforcement and public education efforts alone have proven insufficient to deter widespread use.

The table below shows the number of fireworks-related calls for service reported to the Oceanside Police Department for the last 3 years. Each year is broken down to show data for the week of the 4<sup>th</sup>

of July and the months preceding and following the holiday. In each of the past three years, fireworks-related calls for service during the week of July 4<sup>th</sup> exceeded the total number of calls received during the six-month period preceding the holiday and the remaining six months of the year.

	2023	2024	2025
Jan 1 - Jun 30	131	125	156
Jul 1 - Jul 7	254	301	290
Jul 8 - Dec 31	204	153	179

Peer City Research:

Staff conducted a review of fireworks enforcement programs in agencies across California and found that the following agencies were using a combination of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and social host ordinances to target and enhance illegal fireworks enforcement: Sacramento, Elk Grove, Riverside, Indio, San Jose, Stanton, Hemet, Citrus Heights, Brea, Atascadero, and San Joaquin County.

Staff conducted a more refined inquiry into the specifics of programs in the following jurisdictions: Sacramento, Elk Grove, and Riverside. The following table summarizes the elements implemented in those programs:

City	Sacramento	Elk Grove	Riverside
Lead Department	Fire	Police & Code Enforcement	Police, Code Enforcement & Fire
Ordinance	Fireworks with Social Host language	Fireworks with Social Host language	Fireworks with Social Host language
Use of UAS	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fine Structure	\$1,000 1st offense; \$2,500 2 <sup>nd</sup> offense within 1 year; \$5,000 3 <sup>rd</sup> offense within 1 year; \$10,000 at a park, parkway, school, or critical infrastructure No Maximum	\$1,000 per firework No Maximum	\$1,500 plus disposal fee Maximum fine of \$1,500 per day; in process of increasing
Fireworks Targeted	“Dangerous” as designated by the California Health and Safety Code	“Dangerous” as designated by the California Health and Safety Code	All Fireworks
Year program began	2025	2025	2025

Reduction in calls for service since implementation?	Yes*	Yes	No*
Public Education Campaign	Yes	Yes	Yes
Appeals Process	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cost Recovery	Yes	Yes	Yes

\*Two of the identified programs began implementing UAS-assisted enforcement in combination with social host liability in 2025. As a result, sufficient longitudinal data is not yet available to conclusively determine the effectiveness of these measures. Early feedback from jurisdictions indicates mixed results, which may be attributable to differences in enforcement intensity or public education strategies.

**Proposed Illegal Fireworks Abatement Program**

Based on the above research staff proposes an approach that combines education and enforcement to reduce the number of illegal fireworks launched in Oceanside. Should staff receive City Council direction to proceed with all or some of the proposed measures, an ordinance would be prepared and presented for formal Council consideration at a future meeting.

Public Education

Public education efforts would continue to emphasize the dangers associated with illegal fireworks while also highlighting enhanced enforcement measures and penalties. Outreach would utilize City websites, social media platforms, traditional media releases, and interviews. These efforts would coincide with ordinance adoption and resume annually approximately 30 days prior to the July 4th holiday.

Enforcement

Upon City Council direction to proceed, a revised fireworks ordinance outlining the use of UAS technology, social host liability, and a specific fine structure will be presented to Council in the coming months.

Enforcement efforts would include the implementation of 3 UAS teams comprised of 1 Police Officer and 1 Deputy Fire Marshal each and 1 ground contact team comprised of 2 Police Officers, and 1 Police Sergeant. These staffing enhancements would be in service for a 7-hour window during peak firework periods.

While enforcement could be implemented at any time throughout the year, including New Year’s Eve, enhanced efforts would initially be focused on the days surrounding the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday. Use of UAS technology would be limited to response-based enforcement activities and would not involve continuous or indiscriminate surveillance. Operations would comply with applicable state and federal laws (and local policies) governing UAS use and privacy protections. Ground contact teams would attempt to contact offenders and to confiscate fireworks when possible. The teams would be distributed throughout the city based on historical data (heat map attached) and new calls for service.

Social hosts, defined as property owners or tenants (if the property is leased), who knowingly allow illegal fireworks activity on their premises, would be subject to administrative fines. Social hosts may also be held liable for costs associated with property damage or fire suppression efforts resulting from illegal fireworks originating from their property.

Tiered fines for violations would be implemented as follows: \$1,000 for the first offense, \$2,500 for the second, \$5,000 for subsequent offenses, and \$10,000 for violations near parks, schools, or public facilities. Total fines would be capped at \$10,000 in one 24-hour period. Each firework lit would be considered a separate offense.

While efforts will be made to contact and notify the offending party prior to escalation, the proposed ordinance would not prohibit initial or subsequent fines from being administered in cases when direct contact was not possible. Recipients of any fines administered would be eligible to appeal in accordance with the procedures established in Chapter 1.14 of the Oceanside Municipal Code.

Collectively, these measures align with best practices statewide and emphasize deterrence, transparency, and accountability.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Fiscal impacts to the Fire and Police Departments include overtime costs necessary to staff the enforcement program, estimated at \$42,023. This is in addition to staffing within police and fire budgets that have previously been utilized for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Any fines or penalties collected are incidental to enforcement and are not intended as a revenue-generating measure. Enforcement and outreach costs are expected to be managed within existing resources, with response cost recovery offsetting a portion of operational expenses.

### **COMMISSION OR COMMITTEE REPORT**

This item will be presented to the Police and Fire Commission at its next regular meeting on February 10, 2026.

### **CITY ATTORNEY'S ANALYSIS**

The City Attorney will prepare a draft ordinance for consideration at a subsequent meeting if so directed by the City Council.

Prepared by: Blake Dorse, Division Chief  
Reviewed by: David Parsons, Fire Chief

Submitted by: Jonathan Borrego, City Manager

Attachments:

1. Staff Report
2. Heatmap Dec 2022 - Dec 2025