

**NORTHGLENN POLICE MEMORANDUM**  
**#15-2021**

**DATE:** Nov. 15, 2021

**TO:** Honorable Mayor Meredith Leighty and City Council Members

**THROUGH:** Heather Geyer, City Manager *Hmg*

**FROM:** James S. May, Jr., Chief of Police *JSM*  
Ron Osgood, Police Commander

**SUBJECT:** 2021 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks Enforcement Debrief

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**PURPOSE**

To provide City Council with information on the Police Department's 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks enforcement in 2021 and seek City Council direction for 2022 planning purposes.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2019, City Council enacted an ordinance to combat a growing community concern surrounding fireworks and the nuisance created by the use and possession of fireworks within the community. The ordinance prohibits the sale, use, and possession of fireworks within the City. Prior to the adoption of the ordinance, the City's enforcement efforts were governed by the International Fire Code.

Fireworks are defined as "any article, device, or substance prepared for the primary purpose of producing a visual or auditory sensation by combustion, explosion, deflagration, or detonation, including, without limitation, the following articles and devices commonly known and used as fireworks: toy cannons or toy canes in which explosives are used, blank cartridges, the type of balloon which requires fire underneath to propel the same, firecrackers, torpedoes, skyrockets, rockets, Roman candles, dayglo bombs, and torches, or other fireworks of like construction, and any fireworks containing any explosive or flammable compound, or any tablets or other device containing any explosive substance.

"Fireworks" does not include:

- (1) Toy caps which do not contain more than twenty-five hundredths (0.25) of a grain of explosive compound per cap;
- (2) Sparklers, trick matches, cigarette loads, trick noisemakers, toy smoke devices, and novelty auto alarms;
- (3) Highway flares, railway fuses, ship distress signals, smoke candles, and other emergency signal devices.

Municipal Code Section 9-7-2 prohibits the sale and use of fireworks as follows:

- (a) Except as specifically provided in this Article, it is unlawful for any person to offer for sale, expose for sale or sell any fireworks, fountains, or cones; or to have fireworks, fountains, or cones in their possession with the intent to offer said items for sale.
- (b) Except as specifically provided in this Article, it is unlawful for any person to possess, store, handle, use or explode any fireworks.
- (c) The provisions of this Section 9-7-2 may be enforced by any Authorized Officer.

Due to fireworks complaints from the community and by City Council, the Police Department implemented a focused fireworks campaign in 2021 to mitigate illegal fireworks within the City. As presented to Council on April 5, 2021 (Police Department Memorandum #8-2021), this focused campaign had several components:

1. The ordinance change approved by Council in 2019 provided additional enforcement capabilities by the department.
2. A comprehensive communications plan provided education to residents of the ordinance, the danger of fireworks, and the nuisance fireworks place on the community, particularly veterans and pets.
3. The Police Department's enforcement efforts would increase approaching the holiday weekend and peak on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

### **2021 City Park Events**

The fireworks show was canceled at E.B. Rains Jr. Memorial Park. In place of the City's traditional July 4<sup>th</sup> festival, smaller events were held from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. at E.B. Rains Park, Wyco Park, Hugh Danahy Park, and North Park at Fox Run. One sergeant and 12 officers were assigned to work the park events to ensure they were safe and fun for everyone attending the events.

### **2022 City Park Events**

The expectation for 2022 is that the City's traditional 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival will return to E.B. Rains Jr. Memorial Park. During past years, the festival has provided an opportunity for community members to gather in a central location to enjoy a festival-like atmosphere and experience a City-sponsored and professionally-produced fireworks display. During this event, the Police Department utilizes all its resources to ensure the public's safety during the event.

COVID-19 protocols restricting large-scale public events altered the Police Department's enforcement practices in 2020 and 2021. Upon returning to the City's traditional, large-scale public gathering of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival in 2022, the department's resources will not be available to provide the level of fireworks enforcement seen during the past two years. As a result, a review of the department's approach to illegal fireworks will be necessary.

### **Fireworks Enforcement**

The department staffed the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with all available sworn officers working and added civilian records staff during peak hours to assist with clearances and record searches. In addition, the Police Department's efforts included a zero-tolerance approach to illegal fireworks throughout the City. Officers were deployed in strategic areas based on geographical analysis of high fireworks complaints from June 1 through July 4, 2021.

All sworn officers not working their regularly scheduled shift had staggered shifts throughout the day and evening, with the majority of officers working between 6 p.m. July 4 and 3 a.m. on July 5. One commander, two lieutenants, two sergeants, and 21 officers were assigned solely to fireworks enforcement. Officers were paired up into teams to focus enforcement efforts on the areas with the highest number of complaints. Additionally, the team concept supported officer safety and mitigated an unknown resident response to the new ordinance enforcement and fine parameters. In addition to the fireworks enforcement efforts on July 4, six officers were brought in to work two-person teams to enforce fireworks violations on July 2 and July 3, from 8 p.m. until 1 a.m. the following day.

### **Calls for Service Statistics**

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is often the busiest night of the year for the Police Department.

The standard period used for 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks enforcement statistics is from 6 a.m. on July 4 to 6 a.m. on July 5. This 24-hour period is what was reported for the previous year's presentation to City Council.

In 2019, the department received 257 calls for service during those 24 hours. Of the 257 calls, 122 were fireworks complaints. However, most of the fireworks calls came during a five-hour window from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

In 2020, the department received 358 calls during the same 24-hour period from 6 a.m. on July 4 to 6 a.m. on July 5, a 45% increase in the total number of calls for service over 2019. This is an average of one call for service every four minutes. Of those calls, 234 were fireworks-related, which is a 92% increase from 2019.

In 2021, during a 24-hour period from 6 a.m. on July 4 to 6 a.m. on July 5, there were 276 calls for service, a 23% reduction in the total number of calls for service from 2020. Of those calls, 176 were fireworks-related and 76 summonses were written compared to 61 in the same period for 2020.

Several cities in the Denver area held their traditional fireworks displays: Brighton, Broomfield, Commerce City, and Thornton. The firework displays in the neighboring jurisdictions are a potential explanation for the reduction in reported fireworks complaints from 2020.

The officers assigned to patrol coverage handled 100 calls during the 24-hour period, which averages one call for service every 14.4 minutes. These calls will typically take longer due to reporting, arrests, and evidence processing.

### **Fireworks Enforcement Statistics**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Calls for service on July 4	257	358	276
Fireworks calls on July 4	122	234	176
Number of criminal citations on July 4 (Includes fireworks citations)	5	70	79
Number of fireworks-specific citations on July 4	0	61	76
Fireworks calls year to date through July 5	212	591	369
Fireworks-specific citations year to date through July 5	3	83	102

All statistics run from 6 a.m. July 4 to 6 a.m. July 5. Year-to-date stats start Jan. 1 at midnight and end July 5 at 6 a.m.

### **Education**

Efforts to educate residents about the new fireworks ordinance have been ongoing since the City adopted it. Social media platforms, City webpages, yard signs, and an article published in the Connection were used to educate and inform residents of the ordinance and efforts to curtail firework activity. Through social media, residents have expressed receiving knowledge of the new ordinance, the department's efforts to educate residents, and enforcement of the ordinance.

Residents indicated they had received tickets, with one resident stating they received a ticket, will pay the fine, and will continue to use fireworks next year despite these measures.

**BUDGET/TIME IMPLICATIONS**

The department made adjustments when possible to reduce overtime. However, 21 police officers and one animal control officer had 149 hours of overtime on July 4 for a total of 170 hours for July 2, 3, and 4, 2021. That equates to roughly \$8,088 in overtime paid.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

This is for informational purposes only. Staff is requesting City Council provide feedback on 2021 enforcement in order to begin developing a 2022 enforcement approach that will be brought back to City Council in late spring 2022.

**STAFF REFERENCE**

If Council Members have any questions, please contact James S. May, Jr., Chief of Police, at [jmay@northglenn.org](mailto:jmay@northglenn.org) or 303.450.8967.

**ATTACHMENT**

1. Presentation

4<sup>th</sup> of July

ATTACHMENT 1

# ***FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT***

**Ron Osgood**

*Commander*

*303.450.8968*

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**Study Session**

*Nov. 15, 2021*



**CITY OF**  
**Northglenn**

# ***PURPOSE***

**To provide City Council with information on the Police Department's 4th of July fireworks enforcement in 2021 and seek City Council direction for 2022 planning purposes.**

# ***BACKGROUND***

## **History**

- Ordinance enacted by Council in 2019 (Municipal Code Section 9-7-2).
- Prohibited the sale, use, and possession of fireworks within the City
- Ordinance provided additional enforcement capabilities.
- Communications plan educated residents on danger of fireworks.
- Enforcement efforts focused on the holiday weekend

# ***FIREWORKS DEFINITION***

## **Fireworks are defined as:**

- Any article, device, or substance prepared for the primary purpose of producing a visual or auditory sensation by combustion, explosion, deflagration, or detonation, including but not limited to:
  - Firecrackers, torpedoes, skyrocketes, rockets, roman candles
  - Fireworks containing any explosive or flammable compound, or any tablets or other device containing any explosive substance



# ***FIREWORKS ORDINANCE***

## **Fireworks do not include:**

- Toy caps
- Sparklers
- Trick matches
- Cigarette loads
- Noisemakers
- Toy smoke devices



# 2021 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY

## Events

- The fireworks show was canceled at E.B. Rains Jr. Memorial Park.
- Smaller events were held at E.B. Rains Park, Wyco Park, Hugh Danahy Park, and North Park in Fox Run.
- Officers were assigned to work the park events to ensure public safety.



# 2022 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY

## Events

- Expectation is to return to a traditional 4<sup>th</sup> of July festival
- Festival provides an opportunity for community members to gather in a central location to enjoy a City-sponsored and professionally-produced fireworks display.
- During the event, all available police resources will be utilized to ensure public safety.

# ***CITY EVENTS***

## **Staffing**

- Department resources will not be available to provide the level of fireworks enforcement seen during the past two years.
- A review of the department's approach to illegal fireworks enforcement will be necessary.

# ***ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS***

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Calls for service on July 4	257	358	276
Fireworks calls on July 4	122	234	176
Criminal and firework citations on July 4	5	70	79
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# AGENCY COMPARISONS

Agency	Number of Fireworks Calls	Number of Fireworks Citations
Northglenn	176	76
Thornton	194	5
Commerce City	100	5
Brighton	70	4
Broomfield	87	5
Westminster	Unknown	0

# QUESTIONS?

**Ron Osgood**

*Commander*

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