

**POLICE MEMORANDUM**  
**#16-2023**

**DATE:** Aug.14, 2023

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

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

**FROM:** James S. May, Jr., Chief of Police *JSM/217*  
Peter Rice, Police Commander

**SUBJECT:** Police Department Fourth of July Fireworks Enforcement

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**PURPOSE**

To provide City Council with information on the Northglenn Police Department's (NPD) 2023 Fourth of July fireworks enforcement and seek City Council direction for 2024 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, which 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. This includes, 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 City Council, NPD implemented a focused fireworks campaign in 2021 to mitigate illegal fireworks within the City. As presented to Council on April 5, 2021 (NPD Memorandum #8-2021), this focused campaign had several components:

1. The ordinance change approved by Council in 2019 provided additional enforcement capabilities for the department.
2. A comprehensive communications plan provided education to residents about the ordinance, the danger of fireworks, and the nuisance fireworks place on the community, particularly veterans and pets.
3. The NPD's enforcement efforts would increase approaching the holiday weekend and peak on the Fourth of July.

### **Fireworks Enforcement**

The Department staffed the Fourth of July with all available sworn officers and added civilian records staff during peak hours to assist with clearances and record searches. In addition, NPD's efforts included a zero-tolerance approach to illegal fireworks throughout the City. Officers were deployed strategically based on a geographical analysis of high fireworks complaints from June 30 through July 4, 2023.

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. on July 4 and 2 a.m. on July 5. Officers were paired 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 enforcement and fine parameters. In addition to the fireworks enforcement efforts on July 4, four officers were brought in to work two-person teams to enforce fireworks violations on June 30, July 1, and July 2, from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m. the following day.

### **Calls for Service Statistics**

The Fourth of July is often the busiest night of the year for the Police Department.

The standard period used for Fourth of July fireworks enforcement statistics is from 6 a.m. on July 4 to 6 a.m. on July 5. These are the parameters which were reported to City Council last year.

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, 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.

In 2022, during a 24-hour period from 6 a.m. on July 4 to 6 a.m. on July 5, there were 219 calls for service. Of those calls, 97 were fireworks-related, and 10 summonses were written.

In 2023, during a 24-hour period from 6 a.m. on July 4 to 6 a.m. on July 5, there were 226 calls for service. Of those calls, 98 were fireworks-related, and 12 summonses were written. These calls will typically take longer due to reporting, arrests, and evidence processing.

**Fireworks Enforcement Statistics - Fireworks Calls/Calls for Service (FWC/CFS)**

<b>Data Pull</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
FWC/CFS June 30	2	5	150% increase
FWC/CFS July 1	3	13	333% increase
FWC/CFS July 2	26	16	-38.5% decrease
FWC/CFS July 4	97	98	1% increase
Citations June 30	0	1	Not calculable
Citations July 1	0	3	Not calculable
Citations July 2	3	3	0% change
Citations July 4	10	12	20% increase

**Education**

Efforts to educate residents about the 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 ordinance, the Department's efforts to educate residents, and the enforcement of the ordinance.

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

**BUDGET/TIME IMPLICATIONS**

The Department adjusted, when possible, to reduce overtime. However, 23 police officers had 184 hours of overtime on July 4. There were an additional 12 hours of overtime for June 30, July 1, 2, and 3, 2023. That equates to approximately \$12,467 in overtime.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff requests City Council to provide feedback on 2023 enforcement to develop a 2024 enforcement approach that will be brought back to City Council in late spring 2024.

**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.