

**NORTHGLENN POLICE DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM**  
**#12-2020**

**DATE:** July 13, 2020

**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*  
Heidi Walts, Police Commander

**SUBJECT:** Fourth of July Fireworks Enforcement

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**PURPOSE**

To inform City Council on the Northglenn Police Department's 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks enforcement.

**BACKGROUND**

Based on the direction from City Council in 2019, the city and the police department implemented a focused fireworks campaign in 2020 to mitigate fireworks within the City of Northglenn. This three-phase campaign, as outlined during the June 22, 2020 Council meeting, had several components. First, the ordinance change approved by Council allowed for additional enforcement capabilities by the department. Second, a marketing campaign was created to inform our residents of the new changes to the ordinance as well as the new penalties. Third, the police department's enforcement efforts were increased, particularly on July 4.

This year presented two new components that were identified for consideration. First, the COVID-19 pandemic and the second, Senate Bill 20-217. COVID-19 brought a level of uncertainty to what the 4<sup>th</sup> of July would look like but had to be incorporated into the planning. Senate Bill 20-217 was enacted by the state that attached language, which could potentially constrain the efforts of an officer to contact someone before having a legal or lawful purpose which, correspondingly posed direct implications on unknown or refused reporting parties. Officers are no longer able to use the information provided by an unknown or refused reporting party (RP), but requires the officer to develop further reasonable suspicion or probable cause – legal/lawful information – to then contact or engage a person about fireworks. Without a known RP who is willing to provide the information as a witness, the officer must take time to develop this information on their own. With the number of complaints initiated, it was generally not feasible to take time to do this.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, the department focused on two areas: E.B. Rains, Jr. Memorial Park and Fireworks Enforcement.

**E.B. RAINS, JR. MEMORIAL PARK**

E.B. Rains, Jr. Memorial Park has been part of a rich tradition for the City of Northglenn, being the focal point for many of the activities sponsored by the city. As such, it has become a tradition for families, residents, and guests to spend the day and night at the park for such events, especially the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. With the Governor's Safer at Home and in the Vast Great Outdoors Order still in place, the efforts around the park were modified to assist with this order and minimize the number of groups or gatherings happening at the park. Since all events, including the city's

fireworks show, were canceled at E.B. Rains, Jr. Memorial Park, it was an unknown as to what attendance at the park would look like throughout the day and evening. As part of the effort to limit large gatherings, the department limited access but did not stop any patrons from enjoying the park for the day.

The department deployed six officers beginning at 7 a.m. to assist with the Cool Car Cruise, as well as three officers to monitor the park and all attendees that wished to spend their day out in the park. Officers assisted with preparing the vehicles for the summer goody bag hand out as well as traffic control and direction during the Cool Car Cruise. Once the Cool Car Cruise was completed, those officers transitioned to the park. The officers assigned to the park were there to make sure the park was a safe and fun environment while enforcing park rules and city ordinances. A paramedic team was staged in the park at noon to attend to any medical issues that arose.

Overall, attendance was very minimal in the park, estimated at under 500 people throughout the entire day. The units assigned to the park were able to interact with the patrons in a positive manner and assist with handing out the goody bags; ultimately, no enforcement was needed within the confines of the park this year. Park units then transitioned during the evening hours to assist with enforcement. Although this 4<sup>th</sup> of July in E.B. Rains, Jr. Memorial Park was uneventful, it should be noted that this is atypical. It should not be presumed to be the same when the city resumes the 4<sup>th</sup> of July activities and fireworks show in the future.

### **FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT**

In response to last year's direction from City Council, the department fully staffed the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with every sworn officer working, as well as adding civilian records staff working during the peak hours to assist with clearances/records searches, as well park rangers in the park and code enforcement throughout the city.

All sworn officers who were not scheduled to work the road as their primary shift worked various shifts throughout the day and evening, with the greatest focus of officers on July 4 between the hours of 3 p.m. to 3 a.m. the following day. An additional three sergeants, 17 officers, and one commander were assigned solely to fireworks enforcement, along with one commander and one sergeant. Five officers who were assigned to E.B. Rains, Jr. Memorial Park transitioned to primarily fireworks enforcement beginning at approximately 6 p.m. Officers were paired up into Fireworks Enforcement Teams due to the overall number of vehicles available, the ability to handle the call quickly as a team, as well as safety concerns attributed to the current climate across the country and unknown citizen response to the new ordinance enforcement and fine parameters.

Based on the overall number of complaints in the various areas throughout the city in 2019, two enforcement teams were dedicated to the Fox Run area in anticipation of a high volume of calls again in 2020. The other teams were distributed throughout the four police districts.

### **CALLS FOR SERVICE STATISTICS**

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is often the busiest night of the year for the Northglenn Police Department. To make a direct comparison to last year, the standard period used for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks comparison was from 6 a.m. on July 4 to 6 a.m. on July 5. This 24-hour period is what was reported during last year's presentation to City Council.

In 2019, the department received 247 calls for service during this 24 hours. Of the 247 calls, 117 were fireworks complaints. A majority of the fireworks calls, however, came in during a five-hour window from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

In 2020, the department received 358 calls in the same 24-hour period from 6 a.m. on July 4 through 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 100% increase from 2019.

Those officers assigned to patrol coverage handled 124 calls during the 24-hour period, which correlates to one call for service every 11 minutes. These calls will typically, on average, take longer due to reporting, arrests, and evidence processing. During these 24 hours, there were 11 high priority calls, which typically require a two-plus officer response, 59 high-medium priority calls, which typically recommend a one to two-officer response, and the 54 remaining were medium to low priority which typically are a one-plus officer response. There were 15 officers and three sergeants working during this period. Due to the normal call load, officers working normal patrol duties were rarely, if at all, able to assist with fireworks enforcement leaving fireworks enforcement to the other officers who were assigned those duties.

The department received a total of 234 fireworks calls during these 24 hours. However, the first fireworks call did not come in until 2:34 p.m. and the last call at 2:54 a.m., so roughly 12 hours for all 234 fireworks calls. However, 218 calls came in between 6 p.m. and 1 a.m. or approximately one call for service every two minutes. Between 2 p.m. and 1 a.m., two commanders, 22 officers, and four sergeants were assigned to fireworks enforcement.

- Of the calls, 89 were an unknown or refused RP. Even with an unknown/refused RP, based on the information provided, the officers were able to identify and develop enough probable cause on their own to write five summonses as a result of these complaints.
- 71 of the calls were self-initiated by the officers trying to locate fireworks they either heard or saw, which resulted in 48 fireworks summonses.
- 74 calls had known RP's and resulted in eight summonses. It should be noted that even when the RP was known, the actual location or parties involved were rarely provided.

The contacts resulted in a total of 61 issued summonses during the 12 hours.

One unique factor that officers found this year that had not been identified in the past were look-outs being used to warn violators that the police were approaching. On several occasions, officers noted upon arriving into an area or location where there were complaints of fireworks that they would hear whistles or code words. The officers would find remnants of recently used fireworks as well as abandoned, unused fireworks in those areas. These actions occurred in various areas throughout the city. Although this was not identified as a significant issue, it is a factor that should be assessed to understand compliance efforts with residents.

On July 4, an additional 16 complaints were received via the Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) system, which are being reviewed to determine if further action is necessary.

**STATISTICS**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Total Calls For Service on July 4</b>	358	257	252
<b>Total Fireworks Calls on July 4</b>	234	122	117
<b>Total Number of Citations on July 4 (Includes Fireworks Citations)</b>	70	5	
<b>Total Number of Fireworks Specific Citations on July 4</b>	61	0	
<b>Fireworks Calls Year to Date through July 5</b>	591	212	
<b>Fireworks Specific Citations Year to Date through July 5</b>	83	4	

All statistics run from 0600 on July 4 to 0600 on July 5 / YTD stats start January 1 at 0000 and end July 5 at 0600

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Schedule adjustments were made for a majority of the officers. However, approximately ten sworn and two civilian personnel will potentially have overtime.

**EDUCATION**

Efforts to educate residents about the new fireworks ordinance have been ongoing since the ordinance was adopted. Social media and the city and police department web pages have had information posted, an article was published in the Connection, and yard signs were produced and used throughout the city. These efforts were primarily made to get the information distributed to residents in an attempt to curtail any firework activity. It should be noted that residents have expressed, through social media, the knowledge of the new ordinance and the department's efforts to educate the residents as well as enforce the ordinance. Residents expressed 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.

**STAFF REFERENCE**

If Council Members have any questions or comments, they may contact Chief James S. May, Jr., at 303.450.8967 or [jmay@northglenn.org](mailto:jmay@northglenn.org), or Commander Heidi Walts at 303.450.8962 or [hwalts@northglenn.org](mailto:hwalts@northglenn.org).



# Northglenn Police Department Agency Comparison 4<sup>th</sup> of July

Agency	# of Fireworks Call	# of Fireworks citation
Northglenn	234	61
Thornton	301	38
Commerce City	263	37
Adams County SO	279	22
Brighton	83	1
Broomfield	134	2
Westminster	259	0



# Northglenn Police Department 4<sup>th</sup> of July Metro Area



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