



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS CAUTION CITIZENS ON DANGERS OF ILLEGAL FIREWORKS THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**Illegal Fireworks Use Poses Extreme Risk of Catastrophic Wildfires During Current Period of Critically High Fire Danger**

**CONCORD, CALIF., July 2, 2018** – Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (ConFire) and local law enforcement agencies across the county today warned citizens about the extreme dangers of illegal fireworks during the Independence Day holiday period.

Fire and law enforcement leaders reminded residents and visitors that all fireworks, regardless of type or safety labeling, are illegal everywhere in the county. There are no safe fireworks and, in addition to the potential for grievous bodily harm posed by these illegal devices, the risk of causing catastrophic wildfires during this time of extremely high fire danger is great.

Officials urged residents to leave fireworks displays to the professionals by instead choosing to visit one of the several officially-sanctioned displays planned around the county on the evening of the Fourth.

“The only safe and sane approach to fireworks in Contra Costa County is to simply not use them,” said Chief Jeff Carman, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. “Not only are they uncontrollable and dangerous, they are also illegal, and their use poses the real possibility of catastrophic wildland fires in this time of critically high fire risk.”

“Depending on the type and amount of fireworks possessed, offenders could face fines of up to \$5,000 and possible imprisonment,” said Chief Tammany Brooks, Antioch Police Department. “We encourage everyone to obey the law, not only for their safety, and the safety of everyone around them, but also to avoid the potentially negative life impacts a fireworks arrest can cause.”

“Our first concern is the safety of our residents and, unfortunately, with the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday, we see an uptick in fireworks-related accidents,” said Lafayette Police Chief Ben Alldritt. “Please be careful, take care of your family and avoid using fireworks altogether – the City of Lafayette wants you to be safe and accident-free this holiday.”

“The Concord Police Department wishes everyone a wonderful Red, White, and Blue celebration,” said Lt. Nick Gartner, Concord Police Department. “Please be mindful and responsible as you honor this special holiday. Keep yourself, your family, and your neighbors safe by avoiding the use of dangerous fireworks.”

“While Independence Day is a time for celebrating, and we wish you all the best on this holiday, the Martinez Police Department remains steadfast in our commitment to public safety,” said Chief Manjit Sappal. “As such, we wish to make it clear that fireworks are illegal and unsafe; they can cause injury and devastating fire related damage. Please commit to the safety of your family, friends, and neighbors by not using any fireworks.”

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"The 4th of July is a time to celebrate and it comes with many traditions. One, is the illegal use of fireworks" said Chief Brian Addington, Pittsburg Police Department. "In the City of Pittsburg, we have another tradition: deploying a special police task force dedicated to rapidly responding to reports of illegal fireworks. We did it last year and took many fireworks off the streets - and we'll do it again this year to protect lives and property."

Last year, illegal fireworks use in the county sparked hundreds of preventable vegetation fires that threatened lives and structures and strained emergency responder resources needed for other higher priority fire and medical emergencies.

In addition to the fire danger posed by fireworks, there are significant risks of serious injury or death. Thousands of people each year are injured by illegal fireworks nationwide, with more than half of these victims being under the age of 15.

Fire and law enforcement officials urge residents to protect their homes, families and neighborhoods by reporting all use of illegal fireworks immediately to their local law enforcement.

For more information on protecting homes and businesses in Contra Costa County from wildfires, visit [www.cccfpd.org/exterior-hazards.php](http://www.cccfpd.org/exterior-hazards.php).

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*Contra Costa County Fire Protection District is a recognized fire service leader providing fire and emergency medical services to nearly a million people across a 304 square-mile area, in and around the 19 cities of Contra Costa County, California. In 2017, the District responded to nearly 74,000 fire and EMS emergencies and provided expert medical care in the conduct of more than 75,000 ambulance transports. The District, with 25 fire stations and nearly 400 employees, is dedicated to the preservation of life, property and the environment.*