



NEWS ADVISORY

June 24, 2014

For immediate release

CITY PLANS FIREWORKS LAW ENFORCEMENT

The use of most fireworks in the city of Missoula is illegal, and City leaders are serious about enforcement.

The Missoula City Council and Mayor John Engen have asked for vigorous enforcement in response to annual complaints from citizens. Fireworks start fires, endangering property in town and bringing the risk of wildland fires. They cause injuries and are part of hospital emergency departments' busiest day of the year. They cause many dogs to become frightened, lost and injured, creating Missoula Animal Control's busiest day of the year. And they frighten and disturb people.

“Every year on July 5 we hear about how fireworks terrified pets and disturbed the peace throughout Missoula’s neighborhoods,” Missoula City Council President Marilyn Marler said. “Simply focusing on education has not worked in the past, so the City has ramped up enforcement. The take-home message: If you choose to light it, expect to receive a ticket.”

Police Department leaders have scheduled extra police officers on overtime shifts July 3 and 4. Fire Department personnel will be working around town with fire trucks. The Fireworks Report Line, operated by the emergency dispatchers at the city-county Office of Emergency Management’s Missoula 9-1-1 Center, is working 24 hours a day. **To report violations, call 258-4850.**

Firefighters as well as police officers have the authority to issue citations. The penalties are \$100 plus court costs for a first offense and \$300 plus court costs for a second offense during the same calendar year as the first offense.

The Missoula City Council amended the fireworks ordinance in fall of 2013 to allow the sale and discharge of “novelty” fireworks in the city. Those include sparklers, party poppers and other small

fireworks. Visit the City website for a complete description:

<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/1763/Fireworks>

Professional public displays, which are allowed by permit from the Missoula Fire Department chief, are done safely at pre-determined times and are short in duration. Public displays in Missoula will be held on July 3 at the civic stadium after the Osprey baseball game and on July 4 at Southgate Mall.

The City of Missoula Communications office is distributing information through advertising in the Missoulian newspaper in the print and online editions; radio advertising on-air and online; information on the City website; and news coverage. Missoula Fire Department staff members are posting information on legal novelty fireworks at fireworks stands in the area.

For interviews, contact:

Dax Fraser, assistant fire marshal, Missoula Fire Department: 552-6210

Travis Welsh, public information officer, Missoula Police Department, 552-6290

Marilyn Marler, Missoula City Council president, 544-7189

#

Ginny Merriam, Public Information/Communications Director, 552-6007 office; 546-7692 cell