

Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks

August 11, 2025

The Honorable Mayor and Members of the Escondido City Council
City of Escondido
201 N. Broadway
Escondido, CA 92025
Via Email

Subject: Urgent Request for Council Resolution to Enforce Illegal Fireworks Ban and Launch Proactive Fire Safety Measures

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

The Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks group respectfully urges the City Council to take immediate action to address the growing threat of illegal fireworks. These are not harmless disturbances—they are dangerous, destructive, and a public safety crisis that threatens lives, property, and our emergency services.

- 1. Strengthen Enforcement Through a Maximum Enforcement Program (MEP)**

The time has come for Escondido to move beyond reactive enforcement and establish a structured Maximum Enforcement Program. This program should prioritize interdepartmental coordination, with fire and police personnel working together year-round to enforce fireworks laws. **We also recommend adding a Fireworks Social Host Ordinance (FSHO)** that allows citations to be issued to property owners where violations occur, even if the violator is not directly identified. This will streamline enforcement and make accountability clearer.

- 2. Establish Higher Fines and Strict Liability**

To deter repeat offenders, fines should be increased to the maximum amount allowed by a general law city (\$1,500), with each violation subject to a separate fine. Additionally, **violators should be held strictly liable** for their actions, regardless of intent, to ensure enforcement is effective and equitable.

- 3. Launch a Drone-Based Enforcement Pilot Program**

We strongly support the launch of a drone-based enforcement program modeled after successful initiatives in Riverside and Elk Grove. The Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks group has gathered and can provide implementation documents from other cities' programs—Riverside, Elk Grove, and Long Beach—that you can use to model a program for the City of Escondido. **Drone operations can provide real-time documentation, enhance deterrence, and shift enforcement to a proactive model.** We also advocate for

stacking fines for each device used, ensuring proportional accountability for each violation.

4. **Annual Enforcement Reporting**

We urge the Council to require that **both police and fire departments present an enforcement operation plan by May 1st of each year**, as well as an **after-action report by October 1st** to assess the effectiveness of the program and inform future enforcement strategies.

5. **Allocation of Citation Revenues**

To ensure sustainable enforcement, we recommend that at least **50% of all collected fines be allocated to an "Escondido Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Fund"** to support ongoing illegal fireworks enforcement efforts.

The risks associated with illegal fireworks demand immediate attention. We ask the City Council to adopt a resolution that implements these proposals, which will ensure Escondido becomes a leader in fireworks enforcement and public safety.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to public safety.

Sincerely,

Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks

Heather Middleton - 101heatherm@gmail.com

Denise Rolen – CEO, Escondido Fire Safe Council, denise@escondidofsc.com

Alicia Arlow - sweetbeat1@yahoo.com

Cc:

City Manager Sean McGlynn

City Attorney Mike McGuinness