

Subject: Request for Adoption of Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Resolution

Dear Mayor and Members of the Escondido City Council,

On behalf of Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks and the Escondido Fire Safe Council, we respectfully submit the enclosed resolution for your consideration. This proposal is not about creating new laws—it's about enforcing the ones we already have.

Illegal fireworks are banned in Escondido, yet violations continue to endanger our homes, hillsides, pets, and vulnerable neighbors. The attached resolution outlines a proactive enforcement strategy that includes:

- **A Maximum Enforcement Program with interdepartmental coordination**
- **A Fireworks Social Host Ordinance to hold property owners accountable**
- **Drone-based monitoring modeled after successful programs in Riverside and Elk Grove**
- **Increased fines and strict liability to deter repeat offenses**
- **Annual reporting for transparency and improvement**
- **Allocation of citation revenues to sustain enforcement efforts**

These measures reflect the urgent requests outlined in our August 11, 2025 letter. We've gathered best practices, built community support, and are ready to assist with implementation.

We ask that you consider and adopt this resolution to protect Escondido's safety, dignity, and resilience. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to public safety.

Respectfully,

Heather Middleton - 101heatherm@gmail.com

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

Alicia Arlow - sweetbeat1@yahoo.com

CITY OF ESCONDIDO RESOLUTION NO. 2025-XX

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ESCONDIDO TO IMPLEMENT A
MAXIMUM ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM INCLUDING DRONE MONITORING, STRICT LIABILITY,
AND REVENUE ALLOCATION TO COMBAT ILLEGAL FIREWORKS AND PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY**

WHEREAS:

- The City of Escondido is located in a high wildfire-risk region and has experienced repeated fire danger during Red Flag conditions exacerbated by illegal fireworks;
- The use of consumer fireworks is already prohibited under existing Escondido municipal code, and this resolution seeks only to enhance enforcement of current law—not to introduce new restrictions;
- Illegal fireworks pose serious risks to pets, veterans, individuals with trauma history, and local ecosystems, and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations;
- The City of Riverside successfully implemented an unmanned aerial systems (drone) program that provides effective monitoring, enforcement, and evidence collection during illegal fireworks incidents, enhancing safety for all residents;
- Community support for enhanced enforcement has grown, as reflected in outreach efforts, public feedback, and increasing interest in wildfire mitigation strategies such as defensible space, home hardening, and fire-safe activities;
- Engaging a licensed contractor or UAS service provider can ensure regulatory compliance, technical expertise, and cost predictability in implementing the drone program;
- A structured Maximum Enforcement Program (MEP) with interdepartmental coordination and a Fireworks Social Host Ordinance (FSHO) will streamline enforcement and improve accountability;
- Increasing fines to the maximum allowed under general law (\$1,500 per violation) and applying strict liability will deter repeat offenses and ensure equitable enforcement;
- Annual enforcement planning and reporting will improve transparency and program effectiveness;
- Allocating citation revenues to a dedicated enforcement fund will ensure sustainability and community trust;

- Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks submitted a formal request dated August 11, 2025, outlining specific enforcement measures, and the City Council is urged to consider and adopt the proposals therein;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Escondido:

The City Council acknowledges the urgent request submitted by Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks on August 11, 2025, and hereby considers and adopts the enforcement measures outlined in that letter. This resolution affirms the City's commitment to enforcing existing fireworks laws through enhanced coordination, technology, and accountability measures.

SECTION 1. MAXIMUM ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM (MEP)

The City shall establish a year-round Maximum Enforcement Program coordinated between the Fire and Police Departments to proactively enforce fireworks laws. This includes joint operations, shared data protocols, and coordinated public safety messaging.

SECTION 2. FIREWORKS SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE (FSHO)

The City shall adopt a Fireworks Social Host Ordinance allowing citations to be issued to property owners or responsible parties where illegal fireworks are discharged, regardless of whether the individual violator is identified.

SECTION 3. UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM (UAS) ENFORCEMENT

The City shall implement a drone-based enforcement program to monitor illegal fireworks activity and collect actionable evidence during high-risk periods.

SECTION 4. CONTRACTOR ENGAGEMENT

To ensure technical proficiency and budget efficiency, the City may engage a licensed contractor or professional drone service provider to support program implementation, training, and data collection.

SECTION 5. FINES AND STRICT LIABILITY

Violations of fireworks laws shall be subject to fines of up to \$1,500 per incident, with each device or discharge constituting a separate violation. All violators shall be held strictly liable, regardless of intent.

SECTION 6. ANNUAL ENFORCEMENT REPORTING

The Fire and Police Departments shall present an annual enforcement operation plan to the City Council by May 1st and an after-action report by October 1st to evaluate program effectiveness and recommend improvements.

SECTION 7. CITATION REVENUE ALLOCATION

At least 50% of all collected fines shall be allocated to an "Escondido Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Fund" to support ongoing enforcement, public education, and fire safety initiatives.

SECTION 8. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The City shall conduct public education campaigns to inform residents about the program, encourage safe alternatives, and promote fire-safe practices.

SECTION 9. PRIVACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

All drone operations shall comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws. The City shall maintain clear documentation of flight paths, enforcement actions, contractor scope, and community feedback.

SECTION 10. PILOT PROGRAM

A pilot drone program shall be launched for December 31st, July 4th and other dates deemed high-risk, with results evaluated in collaboration with relevant departments and contractor reports.

SECTION 11. COMMUNITY INPUT

The City encourages community members, local organizations, and safety advocates to participate in shaping outreach and evaluation efforts related to the drone program.

SECTION 12. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Escondido will invite officials from the City of Riverside to brief the Council on the results and lessons learned from their program, with consideration for regional wildfire coordination.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Escondido this [Insert Day] day of [Insert Month], 2025.

Former Draft Resolution

Proposed by: Escondido Fights Illegal Fireworks

Date: July 25, 2025

CITY OF ESCONDIDO RESOLUTION NO. 2025-XX

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ESCONDIDO TO IMPLEMENT A DRONE MONITORING PROGRAM FOR ILLEGAL FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT TO PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY AND MITIGATE WILDFIRE RISK

WHEREAS, the City of Escondido is located in a high wildfire-risk region and has experienced repeated fire danger during Red Flag conditions exacerbated by illegal fireworks; and

WHEREAS, the use of consumer fireworks in Escondido is prohibited due to public safety and fire prevention concerns; and

WHEREAS, the City of Riverside successfully implemented an unmanned aerial systems (drone) program that provides effective monitoring, enforcement, and evidence collection during illegal fireworks incidents, enhancing safety for all residents; and

WHEREAS, video evidence obtained by drones enables law enforcement to issue citations more efficiently, reduces the strain on patrol resources, and enhances deterrence; and

WHEREAS, illegal fireworks pose serious risks to pets, veterans, individuals with trauma history, and local ecosystems, and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations; and

WHEREAS, proactive enforcement aligns with Escondido's commitment to community safety, fire prevention, and responsible celebration; and

WHEREAS, community support for enhanced enforcement has grown, as reflected in local outreach efforts, public feedback, and increasing interest in wildfire mitigation strategies such as defensible space, home hardening, and fire-safe activities; and

WHEREAS, engaging a licensed contractor or UAS service provider can ensure regulatory compliance, technical expertise, and cost predictability in implementing the drone program;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Escondido:

SECTION 1. UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM (UAS) ENFORCEMENT

The City of Escondido shall establish a drone-based enforcement program through its Fire and Police Departments to monitor illegal fireworks activity and collect actionable evidence during high-risk periods.

SECTION 2. CONTRACTOR ENGAGEMENT

To ensure technical proficiency and budget efficiency, the City may engage a licensed contractor or professional drone service provider to support program implementation, training, and data collection.

SECTION 3. INTERDEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION

The City Manager shall coordinate with relevant departments to oversee contractor engagement, protocol development, and pilot testing prior to full implementation.

SECTION 4. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The City shall conduct public education campaigns to inform residents about the program, encourage safe alternatives, and promote fire-safe practices.

SECTION 5. PRIVACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

All drone operations shall comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws. The City shall maintain clear documentation of flight paths, enforcement actions, contractor scope, and community feedback.

SECTION 6. PILOT PROGRAM

A pilot drone program shall be launched for July 4th and other dates deemed high-risk, with results evaluated in collaboration with relevant departments and contractor reports.

SECTION 7. COMMUNITY INPUT

The City encourages community members, local organizations, and safety advocates to participate in shaping outreach and evaluation efforts related to the drone program.

SECTION 8. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Escondido will invite officials from the City of Riverside to brief the Council on the results and lessons learned from their program, with consideration for regional wildfire coordination.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Escondido this [Insert Day] day of [Insert Month], 2025.