



For Immediate Release

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San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Adopts Stricter Fireworks Ordinance

New Rules Include Property Owners or Party Organizers that Use Illegal Fireworks

Stockton, CA – The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors recently adopted a new ordinance introducing stricter regulations on the use of fireworks in unincorporated areas of the County. The new rules aim to improve public safety, reduce fire hazards, and hold individuals more accountable for violations.

The revised ordinance was introduced following a Community Development Department presentation to the Board of Supervisors on April 22, 2025 outlining suggested changes to the County's current fireworks ordinance. The new ordinance provisions include "social host liability" penalties, along with strict liability limitations to protect property owners who are unaware of illegal fireworks activity on their property.

"Illegal fireworks put our neighborhoods, first responders, and families at risk," said Jennifer Jolley, Director of the San Joaquin County Community Development Department. "This ordinance gives law enforcement and the fire districts additional tools to protect our communities and hold people accountable."

Key Highlights of San Joaquin County's Fireworks Ordinance (Including New Provisions):

- ***Fireworks Are Prohibited in Unincorporated Areas:*** The current ordinance makes it illegal to possess, use, sell, transport, or discharge any fireworks—whether "safe and sane" or "dangerous"—in unincorporated parts of San Joaquin County.
- ***Limited Exception for Public Fireworks Shows:*** Public fireworks displays are currently allowed only with a permit from the County Fire Warden. These displays must be run by a licensed pyrotechnic operator, and salute-type fireworks (loud explosive fireworks) are strictly banned, even during permitted shows. This includes single-break aerial salute shells, multi-break shells with salutes and shells, and ground salutes.
- ***Fireworks May Be Seized and Destroyed:*** Law enforcement and fire officials are currently authorized to seize and destroy any illegal fireworks at the owner's expense.

- ***Stronger Penalties and Social Host Accountability:*** The updated ordinance introduces tougher penalties and holds social hosts - including property owners and event organizers - strictly liable if illegal fireworks are used on their property, even if they didn't personally set them off. Parents or guardians may also be held responsible if minors under their care use fireworks illegally. Violations may be charged as misdemeanors or infractions, with fines ranging from \$100 to \$500, depending on how many times the offense has occurred. However, the ordinance protects property owners from liability if they can demonstrate that: The property was rented or leased to someone else; they were not present at the time of the violation; and they had no prior knowledge that fireworks would be used.
- ***Recovery of Public Safety Response Costs:*** Those responsible for illegal fireworks use may be required to reimburse the County for emergency response costs, including fire, law enforcement, and medical services. This applies even if the violator was not present at the scene.
- ***Enforcement:*** The ordinance will be enforced by the San Joaquin County Fire Warden, Sheriff's Office, and local Fire Chiefs. These officials have the authority to inspect property and, if necessary, obtain warrants to investigate suspected violations.

"We want people to enjoy the holiday safely with family and friends," said Paul Canepa, Chair of the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors. "Illegal fireworks have caused fires, injuries, and serious damage. These new rules reflect Board priorities to protect our neighborhoods and keep our community safe. Safety shouldn't depend on what city or area you live in; it should be the standard across the County."

For more information about fireworks regulations or to apply for a public display permit, contact the Community Development Department at 209-468-3121

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