



**VENTURA COUNCIL  
OF GOVERNMENTS**

## **FIREWORKS SAFETY IN VENTURA COUNTY**

A Study of Resources and Strategies for Keeping Ventura County Safe  
During the Fourth of July Holiday

June 30, 2008

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The Ventura Council of Governments (VCOG) is a voluntary joint powers authority representing the ten cities of Ventura County as well as the County. VCOG's goal is to facilitate cooperative sub regional and regional planning, coordination and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern.

VCOG is based on the premise that Ventura County can have more representation without more government and that issues of common concern often extend beyond the purview of local jurisdictions and agencies, requiring insight and input from a wide range of affected interests.

VCOG works efficiently by utilizing existing resources to the greatest extent possible, collaboratively finding new ways to perform needed activities for less, while eliminating duplication of effort.

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Information in this report was compiled by data reported from the following agencies:

Oxnard Police Department, Oxnard Fire Department, Port Hueneme Police Department, Santa Paula Police Department, Santa Paula Fire Department, Simi Valley Police Department, Ventura Police Department, Ventura Fire Department, Ventura County Sheriff's Department, Ventura County Fire Department.

VCOG thanks these agencies for their assistance in the preparation of this report.

## **FIREWORKS SAFETY IN VENTURA COUNTY**

The Fourth of July holiday is a time to reflect on the founding of the United States as well as time to celebrate with friends and family. A major focus of celebrations is fireworks. It is illegal to possess, discharge, or sell any type fireworks in Ventura County. In the City of Fillmore, there are certain types of “safe and sane” fireworks that may be purchased and discharged only within their city limits, while all other types of fireworks are also illegal for possession and discharge in Fillmore.

The ten cities of Ventura County and the County of Ventura that make up the Ventura Council of Governments (“VCOG jurisdictions”) take fireworks safety very seriously. For the 2007 Fourth of July period (July 1-7, 2007) almost 1,500 specific complaints about the use of illegal fireworks were received by VCOG jurisdictions. These complaints led to 115 citations issued, with fines ranging up to \$1,000 for each citation. In addition, thirty individuals were arrested for fireworks related crimes during the period. Over 1,000 pounds of illegal fireworks were seized and destroyed by VCOG jurisdictions.

As VCOG jurisdictions prepare for enforcement activities for the 2008 Fourth of July period, nearly 300 additional police officers, sheriff’s deputies, firefighters, civilian law enforcement personnel and law enforcement volunteers will be working on Friday July 4, 2008 throughout Ventura County. Approximately 125 additional police officers, sheriff’s deputies and firefighters have been assigned countywide to work specifically on fireworks enforcement activities. This is in addition to the usual deployment of police officers, sheriff’s deputies and firefighters who will also be working as usual. Approximately 70 additional police officers, sheriff’s deputies and firefighters have been assigned to work Fourth of July celebrations during the day and professional fireworks displays during the evening. Approximately 70 civilian law enforcement personnel and law enforcement volunteers will be assisting police and fire officials in VCOG jurisdictions in their Fourth of July enforcement activities.

While there is no existing countywide data available for comparison, the amount of resources being expended by VCOG jurisdictions in 2008 Fourth of July safety and enforcement activities is considerable. These resources are being expended to make sure that everyone enjoys a safe holiday. However, the extent of these resources can be reduced if everyone remembers that fireworks are illegal in almost all of Ventura County. All law enforcement jurisdictions and fire agencies in Ventura County plan increased enforcement of existing laws against the illegal possession, discharge and sale of fireworks this year.

VCOG encourages all Ventura County residents to enjoy the Fourth of July holiday and to consider the penalties and costs to themselves and the community before using illegal fireworks.

## **REPORT DATA - DETAIL**

<b>Number of Complaints Received During 2007 4th of July Period Sunday July 1 - Saturday July 7, 2007</b>			
	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Citations Issued</b>	<b>Arrests</b>
Camarillo*	45		
Fillmore*	23		
Moorpark*	42		3
Ojai*	9		
Oxnard	726	54	21
Port Hueneme	49	0	
Santa Paula	60	4	
Simi Valley	127	26	6
Thousand Oaks*	56		
Ventura	283	3	
Unincorporated County*	71		
Sheriff's Jurisdiction		28	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,491</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>30</b>

**Notes:**

- 1) \*= Jurisdictions served by Ventura County Sheriff's Department
- 2) Information on citations for entire Sheriff's Department and not available by jurisdiction served.

### **Fireworks Confiscated**

In 2007, the Ventura County Sheriff's Department destroyed over 1,000 pounds of illegal fireworks confiscated in the County. There is no available breakdown between the amount of fireworks seized by the Sheriff's Department and seized fireworks collected by other jurisdictions in the County destroyed by the Sheriff's Department. Individual jurisdictions reported the following amounts of fireworks confiscated: Ventura-125 pounds, Oxnard-300 pounds, Simi Valley -320 pounds, Camarillo -100 pounds, Moorpark-50 pounds.

### **Fines and Citations**

Each VCOG jurisdiction has different protocols for the use of citations and fines. The City of Oxnard reported that in 2007, \$28,400 worth of citations were issued. Twenty-two of these citations were \$1,000 fines for possessing dangerous fireworks while an additional 32 were \$200 citations for safe and sane fireworks. The City of Ventura reported that they issued \$400 fines for the citations that they issued.

## **Specific Enforcement Activities by Jurisdiction**

### **City of Camarillo (Ventura County Sheriff and Fire)**

The Fire Department has assigned an arson patrol from noon until midnight on both July 4 and 5.

Ten additional deputies and seventeen sheriff's civilian volunteers and a Fire Inspector have been assigned to the professional fire works display at Camarillo High School.

Two additional sheriff's deputies have been assigned to handle calls in the City.

### **City of Fillmore (Ventura County Sheriff and Fillmore Fire)**

Fifteen additional sheriff's deputies have been assigned to work the City on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July (Five for daytime events; ten for evening fireworks enforcement). This includes three mounted deputies.

### **City of Moorpark (Ventura County Sheriff and Fire)**

A Fire Inspector has been assigned to the professional fire works display.

The Sheriff's Department will issue misdemeanor citations to those persons in possession of, or using, illegal fireworks. On July 4, Moorpark will be deploying a two-officer bicycle team in order to provide a more stealth approach to catch violators. In addition, the City will add one additional patrol car to deal with increased call load.

### **City of Ojai (Ventura County Sheriff and Fire)**

The Fire Department has assigned an arson patrol from noon until midnight on both July 4 and 5.

A Fire Inspector has been assigned to the professional fire works display.

The Sheriff's Department will use sixteen deputies and ten volunteers to staff the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. In the evening, the Sheriff's Department will use eight deputies, including two as part of a mounted unit and one deployed on a bicycle.

### **City of Oxnard (Oxnard Police and Fire)**

The Oxnard Police Department will again strictly enforce the City's fireworks ordinance. To that end twenty-one additional officers and one sergeant will join the scheduled contingent of officers. The majority of these officers will be deployed to the four police districts for fireworks suppression and calls of loud parties. Each of the three shifts will deploy the normal contingent of ten to twelve officers. These officers will handle all other

calls for police service. There will be two K9 officers; one during the day and one at night. Six Special Enforcement Unit officers and one sergeant will be available to focus on gang activity. Finally, four Surveillance Unit officers and their sergeant will be deployed for both gang and fireworks suppression.

Ventura County Sheriff deputies and Oxnard police officers will be deployed in the Oxnard Harbor for festivities there. Officers will be deployed in phases in the Harbor as activities include a 10K race, a parade, and the evening fireworks show. The Oxnard Police Department will deploy twelve traffic officers, nine officers for crowd control, twelve Traffic Safety and Community Service Officers, a sergeant and commander. The Sheriff's Department will deploy nineteen additional deputies, including one mounted unit and a boat detail. The Sheriff's Department helicopter will be on stand-by.

Because of the increased volume of calls ten dispatchers will be on duty throughout the day. Two additional dispatchers will be deployed to the harbor and handle communications at that venue from the Department's Mobile Command Post.

**City of Port Hueneme  
(Port Hueneme Police and Ventura County Fire)**

The Police Department has increased enforcement in the Hueneme Beach area and adjacent to the two main shopping centers in the City. City Municipal Code and violations and Ventura County ordinances regarding alcohol and fireworks violations will be enforced.

**City of Santa Paula  
(Santa Paula Police and Fire)**

The Police Department will field four officers to cover fireworks calls throughout the evening. Four additional officers will be assigned to the professional fireworks display and then detailed to respond to fireworks calls after the display.

The Fire Department will oversee the professional fireworks display. In addition, a third engine company will be assigned to work with the Police Department is responding to fireworks calls throughout the evening.

**City of Simi Valley  
(Simi Valley Police and Ventura County Fire)**

The Fire Department has assigned two arson patrols from noon until midnight on both July 4 and 5.

A Fire Inspector has been assigned to the professional fire works display.

The Police Department is continuing its successful 2007 educational campaign with the Ventura County Fire Department on the dangers (both personal injury and structural). There were two residential fires caused by fireworks in 2006, including one home that

was totally destroyed. In 2007, the Police Department deployed 6 2-officer units to address fireworks violations and plans similar efforts for 2008.

The Police Department has created a “Fireworks Tip Line.” Citizens who have knowledge of any planned unlawful fireworks display may report the activity by utilizing a recorded tip line that has been set up at the following number: 805-583-6151. Callers can anonymously leave a message on this tip line. Officers will review the information daily and make contact with potential violators, educating them on the fire dangers and legal consequences of discharging illegal fireworks in the City. Additional steps will also be taken to monitor these areas for violations with an emphasis on prosecution. For residents wanting a Police Officer to respond to in-progress fireworks violations, they may contact the Police Department at 805-583-6950.

**City of Thousand Oaks  
(Ventura County Sheriff and Fire)**

The Fire Department has assigned two arson patrols from noon until midnight on both July 4 and 5.

A Fire Inspector has been assigned to the professional fire works display.

An additional twenty-five sheriff’s deputies and twenty-five uniformed civilian and volunteer personnel have also been assigned in the City for events throughout the day.

**City of Ventura  
(Ventura Police and Fire)**

The Police Department plans to deploy twenty-five additional officers for fireworks suppression and to assist in the increased calls for service. Officers will be assigned citywide as well as to the beach and the professional fireworks display at Ventura College.

The Fire Department will be staffing one additional Paramedic Engine Company.

The City will also continue its “Don’t Blow It” public information campaign about the dangers of illegal fireworks.

**Additional Information – Ventura County Fire Department**

The Fire Department has assigned arson patrols in the Santa Clara Valley and the Highway 33 corridor from noon until midnight on both July 4 and 5.

Firefighting resources will be moved or re-allocated to different areas around the county to provide the best coverage and quickest response should an incident occur. This will include areas near professional fireworks displays where access may be limited due to crowds.

Hand crew staffing will be augmented to have a crew available for response in each major geographic area of the county. At this time, two Ventura County hand crews and

two from Cal Fire will be staffed. A third Cal Fire crew has been requested. One dozer will be available for immediate response.

**Additional Information – Ventura County Sheriff’s Department**

In addition to the 2007 calls for service data above for Sheriff’s Department jurisdictions, not included are general calls for service where no one was actually seen discharging fireworks, but the caller heard or saw what was believed to be fireworks. During the July 1-7, 2007 period, there were a total of 302 of these types of calls and 240 during the July 4 peak period.

One additional patrol deputy will be assigned to unincorporated area around Camarillo.