

Dear Friends and Neighbors ~

It has been a year since we last published a newsletter. It may seem as though nothing has changed in a year's time but there have been some small steps toward our long term goals and objectives. Read on.

Email to and response from Sheriff

On June 8, 2018 I sent an email to County Sheriff Jim Hart on behalf of *Freedom From Fireworks*. I copied the email to the Board of Supervisors (BOS), just so the Sheriff knew the BOS was reading the email also. Here is what I wrote:

"I want to ask what plans are being made for law enforcement to monitor the beaches and neighborhoods adjacent to the beaches next month.

"While there were more citations issued and more fireworks confiscated in 2017 than in 2016, the citations pale in comparison to the volume of fireworks being discharged by hundreds of people. We expect the numbers for 2018 to be much greater than 2017. This is the only way that the public will get the message that enforcement of a health and safety law to protect residents from fireworks is a priority of your department.

"Needless to say, both weekends before and after the 4th will be seen as party time by those who set off fireworks. Therefore, triple fines should be established from June 30th through July 7th.

"Freedom From Fireworks will publish a newsletter in the next two weeks. It will initially go to 196 residents, who will spread it throughout their neighborhoods. We would like to include a strong statement from the Sheriff Department in that newsletter. Something to let the populace know of your intentions."

I received a **quick** response -- on June 11, from Public Information Officer Sgt. Brian Cleveland, attached here:

Included in the reply from Sgt. Cleveland was a copy of the letter that was sent to 700 vacation property owners, spelling out a warning to them. It makes it clear that this year *"The county code for 'Safety Enhancement Penalties' (8.34), will be in effect June 28th through July 10th, 2018. During this time, enhanced fines will be in effect totaling \$1000.00 for specific alcohol, noise and fireworks offenses."*

For more detail, the letter that was sent is attached here:

Other News

- One thing that did happen last year (2017) is that more citations were issued in the County than the previous year (2016). This attached report is from the Sheriff's Office:
- Last September, FFF met with Capitola City Police Chief Terry McManus, to explain how the ordinance for Capitola is quite confusing, in that it allows for the use of safe and sane fireworks on private property but ignores how residents transport their fireworks to their private property, which is not allowed ... in two ways. First, people are not allowed take the safe and sane fireworks they purchase legally in the City of Watsonville out of the City of Watsonville. This is Watsonville law. Second, by law people are not allowed to *possess* safe and sane fireworks in the unincorporated County. Therefore to buy fireworks in the City of Watsonville and drive home with those fireworks to Capitola is to technically "possess" fireworks, isn't it? We shall focus on this part of the puzzle this coming year. To say the truth, we ran out of steam last year, but are re-energized as July 4th approaches.
- Despite the scattered fireworks noise of the past month, there is one story to share with a good ending. A resident on Eddy Lane in Live Oak, who for years chronically discharged large fireworks, throughout the year, has quit. Last month, his misfired explosion *ignited two small fires* in a nearby vacant lot. His neighbors came to the rescue with hoses and Central Fire Department sent two units to mop up the blazes. Apparently quite shaken by the episode, he communicated to neighbors that he has learned his lesson. Let's hope he does not forget his pledge to *not ever do that again*.

Conversations on Nextdoor

As we try to stop the fireworks madness, our greatest challenge is our own neighbors. Apparently half of Santa Cruzans (in addition to the tourists who flock here every July 4th) like fireworks, giving no thought whatsoever to how destructive they are to health and safety of people, pets and wildlife. As an example, on a Nextdoor thread today we got to read the following:

Leslie Smith, Live Oak · 1h ago

What a sad time we live in where people feel the need to record their neighbors setting off fireworks, so neighborly. I should be able to and I have the right to, enjoy fireworks on 4th of July in my hometown. I can guarantee you, since I have lived in the County my entire life, that when we had professional firework shows at the beach and were allowed

"safe and sane" fireworks in our neighborhoods, we didn't have the chaos, illegal fireworks that we've got going on now. And in case no one has noticed, on the 4th our beaches are fenced off so no one can enjoy them, think about that for a moment. Instead of keeping the fireworks contained to a place that won't burn, it has pushed them inland.

I want my fireworks, I will also make sure the Sheriff knows the my side of the story as well.

You have your rights to not want fireworks and I have my rights TO want them.

Leslie Smith, Live Oak · 16m ago

I am not kidding and I don't care that fireworks are illegal, I love watching them and I am happy there are people who set them off anyway. It is the 4th of July after all.

You don't think the Sheriff cares about my side of the story? The Sheriff cares about everyone's side of the story, including mine, the minority certainly in this thread. I will make sure he hears from me.

Contrary to the off repeated myth, closing beaches is not what causes fireworks in our neighborhoods. Even if that was true, the pollution of the beach and ocean and wildlife is not something that should be sacrificed.

What To Do?

We seem to be stuck with too many people who don't care how intolerable their fun is, too many illegal fireworks, too much money made in selling them, and too few law enforcement officers. People, dogs and wildlife, all terrorized. It's maddening.

So, where does that leave those of us who do care?

We knew when we began this campaign that it would take years of work to greatly reduce the use of fireworks both before, during and after July 4th. Interestingly, some neighborhoods reported fewer explosions prior to the 4th in 2017, compared to 2016, even though the 4th itself saw no improvement in the carnage. Even the pre-4th fireworks this year shows a similar pattern of less activity before the 4th.

There is something that all of you can do to help with this campaign. First, speak with your immediate neighbors and find out how many are like-minded. Share our web site with those who feel as you do <http://freedomfromfireworks.weebly.com/>. Encourage them to contact us, just as you did <http://freedomfromfireworks.weebly.com/contact-us.html>.

If you know of neighbors who use fireworks, consider approaching them and explaining how what they do is making your life miserable, the hardship their illegal activity causes you, your loved ones and your pets. Include the danger of fires started by misspent rockets. Perhaps two or three of you can do this together. If they shine you off, then give their names and/or addresses to the Sheriff Department and ask that a law officer contact them. Even possession of fireworks is a violation of County Code, so an officer *does not have to see the firework ignited in order to issue a \$1,000 fine citation.*

As we said three years ago, those who care are in this for the long haul. We're glad all 198 of you receiving this newsletter are aboard. Spread the word!

All the best,
Jean Brocklebank
on behalf of Freedom From Fireworks
<http://freedomfromfireworks.weebly.com/>