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# LOMPOC FIRE DEPARTMENT

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*Stanley K. Hart, Battalion Chief – Operations Officer*

We are about to celebrate our Independence Day. Backyard barbeques, family parties, the American flag waving in the summer breeze, kids running around having fun. Idyllic and comforting in its tradition. It also means people will be buying and setting off fireworks as part of the traditional celebrations. However, you should know that **fireworks are illegal in the City of Lompoc!**

Fireworks are fun and exciting but they are inherently dangerous. Every year people are injured by the misuse of these exploding devices. Surprisingly enough, even sparklers have created serious injuries to children. Sparklers burn at over a thousand degrees Fahrenheit and when waved around they can release a hot slag that will easily burn skin or start a fire.

In the United States in 2005, there were 1,800 structure fires and 700 vehicle fires due to fireworks. Together, these fires created over \$39 million of damage. The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) 2006 report showed a total of 9,200 fireworks related injuries.

In addition to fireworks being dangerous and illegal, our wildland fire season has just begun. Any type of fireworks will easily ignite the dry grasses and brush and we've all seen the devastating results of these fires. It's imperative that we keep any type of fireworks away from the wildland areas.

In fact, the only city in Santa Barbara County that sells fireworks or allows their usage is Santa Maria, and these must be designated "safe and sane" fireworks. These devices do not explode or shoot into the sky and they are approved by the State Fire Marshal's office. "Safe and Sane" fireworks consist of fountains, spinners, poppers, smoke balls and novelty fireworks. The requirement for being a "Safe and Sane" fireworks is that it does not explode, shoot into the sky or emit sparks higher than 10 feet. Labeling can be confusing because the labeling is not well regulated. The package may say it is "Safe and Sane" but unless they meet the above requirements, they're not. Even these can be dangerous if misused. So, you might ask the question, "are safe and sane fireworks...well, safe?" This is a debate that can go on for a long time. If used properly, they can be. If children are using them, they need parental supervision. In my opinion, even the "safe and sane" fireworks present too much of a risk. In the statistics I quoted above, 26% of those injuries were sustained while using the "safe and sane" type of fireworks and nearly half of all those injuries were to people under the age of 15 years.

Safety issues aside, **fireworks are illegal in the City of Lompoc.** Parents are responsible for any damages incurred by their children's actions and they are held accountable by the law. If someone is caught using illegal fireworks, all the devices will be confiscated and the person can be fined and / or imprisoned. If you find illegal fireworks, you can turn them over to the Fire Department or Police Department. We will be patrolling, looking for violators several nights before and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We're not trying to be the bad guys, we're trying to keep you and the rest of the public safe. If you choose to purchase legal "Safe and

Sane” fireworks in another city here is some advice.....

Safety tips for using “Safe and Sane” Fireworks:

- **Only use them in cities where they are legal!**
- Read the directions
- Have adults present
- Use outdoors, away from structures, dry grasses or other flammable items
- Light only one at a time
- Never, ever try to re-light one
- Never throw fireworks at another person
- Be overly cautious with children present

So, fire up the barbeque, set out the lemonade and watch the fireworks show at Lompoc High School. Most importantly, be safe!

**The Lompoc Police Fire Departments wish you a “*happy and safe*” Fourth of July.**