

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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CAL FIRE Makes One of the Largest Illegal Fireworks Seizures in State History

Sacramento – With the Fourth of July Holiday just around the corner, CAL FIRE announced one of the largest seizures of illegal fireworks in state history today.

Following a months long investigation, CAL FIRE law enforcement officers arrested seven individuals and seized over 49,000 pounds of fireworks over the past two weeks in connection to a large-scale illegal firework ring. Law enforcement officers found these suspects have been illegally importing, transporting, storing, distributing and selling illegal and dangerous fireworks throughout California for more than 30 years.

CAL FIRE law enforcement officers seized over 49,000 pounds of illegal fireworks stored at locations in Copperopolis, Modesto, Salida, Hayward, Walnut Creek and Oakland. In addition a load of dangerous illegal fireworks, ready for transportation, was also discovered. Officers also seized over \$115,000 as well as a variety of computers, cell phones, firearms and personal items.

CAL FIRE was assisted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the California Highway Patrol (CHP), Calaveras County Sheriff's Office and Calaveras County District Attorney's Office (DA) as they served ten search warrants in Calaveras, Stanislaus, Alameda, and Contra Costa Counties.

This latest enforcement action is part of CAL FIRE's broader mission to protect the public and natural resources, including Fire and Life Safety Laws.

On Independence Day, in a typical year, fireworks account for two out of every five reported fires in the U.S., more than any other cause. On average each year, fireworks in California start 18,500 fires, including 1,300 structure fires, 300 vehicle fires. These fires, on average, cause three deaths, 40 civilian injuries, and \$43 million in direct property damage.

According to the [Consumer Product Safety Commission's \(CPSC\) 2015 Fireworks Annual Report](#), U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 11,900 people for fireworks-related injuries; 51 percent of those injuries were to the extremities and 41 percent were to the head. Two-thirds (65 percent) of the injuries were burns; Children younger than 15 years of age accounted for one-quarter (26 percent) of the estimated injuries. Sparklers were the leading cause of fireworks injuries. More than half of the fireworks injuries incurred by children under five years of age were caused by sparklers.

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“In California, we have a zero tolerance for the use and sale of illegal fireworks,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, director of CAL FIRE. “With the increase in large, devastating fires across the state, we cannot stand by and allow this type of activity to occur, threatening not only property and natural resources, but the lives of the citizens we protect.”

With California’s stringent fireworks laws and the need for increased enforcement, education, and disposal of illegal fireworks, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. included a [proposal](#) in his May Budget Revision to increase funding to stop the use of illegal fireworks in California.

The Administration is actively working with the Legislature on a long-term funding fix for the disposal of confiscated illegal fireworks.

Learn more about firework safety at ReadyforWildfire.org or <https://www.fire.ca.gov>

Photos of seized Fireworks and booking photos;
<https://calfire.box.com/s/k5fckiudjr6qrpsd5cm85rq1w2zu5qa>

Watch the Fireworks News Conference Live on CAL FIRE’s Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/CALFIRE/> at 11:00 a.m. Thursday June 7, 2018

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