

# **FIREWORKS: ONE SPARK AWAY FROM DISASTER?**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2025-2026 San Luis Obispo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) is charged with oversight of local government functions on behalf of its citizens. Its mission is to examine all aspects of local government, ensuring that the San Luis Obispo County (County) is being governed honestly and efficiently and that County monies are being managed judiciously. Its purpose is to shed light on issues within the County. While civil grand jury recommendations do not carry the force of law, their effectiveness depends on the willingness of responding agencies to address them and present their responses to the public in a transparent manner.

This report, “**Fireworks: One Spark Away from Disaster?**,” looks at one aspect of County and local government’s regulations, those governing the use of fireworks. Fireworks of any kind are prohibited in **the** County. There are, however, two cities and two community service districts (CSDs) that do allow fireworks certified by the State of California (State) to be used on certain days of the year within their city limits or district boundaries. The use of fireworks in the remaining portion of the County area or the use of those fireworks not certified by the State is illegal. This report is the result of the Grand Jury’s investigation of this issue.

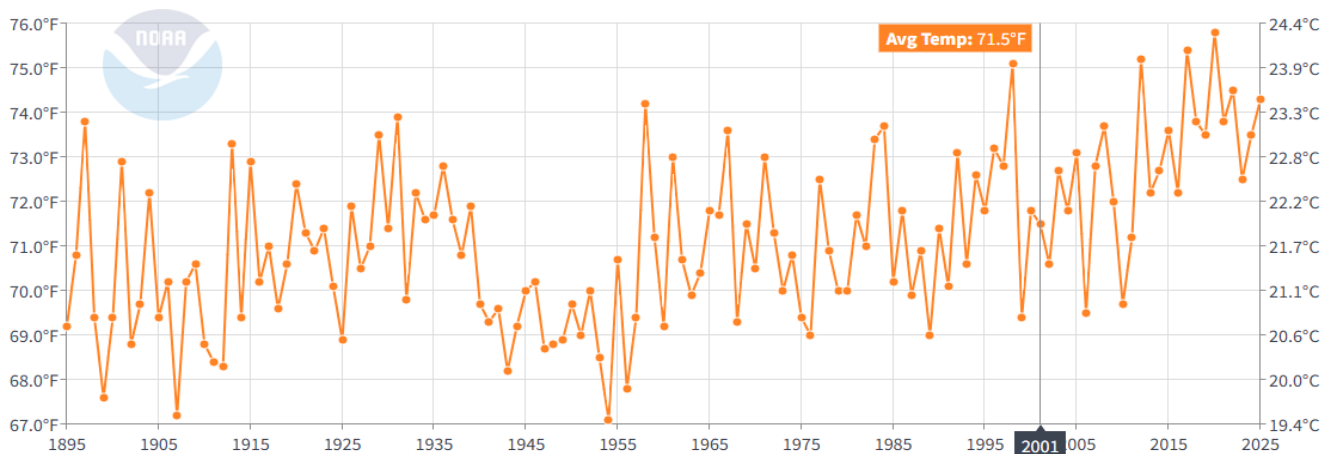
## **ORIGIN**

As global temperatures continue to rise, the County has been experiencing longer and hotter summers, creating the conditions for more wildfires. See Illustration 1 and Appendix A.

## Illustration 1

### San Luis Obispo County, California Average Temperature

August



National Centers for Environmental Information data

As CAL FIRE officials have pointed out, it only takes one spark to set a fire.<sup>1</sup> Fireworks are a potential source of these sparks during the hottest time of the year. In addition, higher temperatures coupled with low humidity significantly increase the fire risk. It may be time for public agencies to increase enforcement of the use of illegal fireworks and to reconsider whether legal fireworks should be allowed anywhere in the County.

During 2025, the use of illegal fireworks resulting in fires made headlines in several San Luis Obispo (SLO) media outlets. The biggest blaze destroyed the historic Templeton Feed & Grain building.<sup>2</sup> In Paso Robles, noise from illegal fireworks was responsible for the death of a family's prized foal.<sup>3</sup>

This report's investigation was initiated based on the level of public attention on fireworks, more than would be expected in a county in which all fireworks are banned in over 99% of the land area. See Table 1.

**Table 1**

**FIREWORKS ALLOWED IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**

ENTITY	APPROXIMATE AREA IN SQUARE MILES
SAN MIGUEL COMMUNITY SERVICE DISTRICT	3
TEMPLETON COMMUNITY SERVICE DISTRICT	3.5
CITY OF ARROYO GRANDE	5.9
CITY OF GROVER BEACH	2.3
TOTAL LAND AREA PERMITTING FIREWORKS	14.7
TOTAL LAND AREA IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY	3,616
PERCENTAGE OF LAND AREA WHERE FIREWORKS ARE ALLOWED A FEW DAYS A YEAR	0.41%

**AUTHORITY**

California Penal Code section 933 requires “Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year.” Section 933.05 further prescribes responses to those findings and recommendations. Responding agencies are directed to report whether they agree or disagree (either partially or wholly) with a finding and whether a recommendation has been implemented, will be implemented, will not be implemented, or requires further analysis. An agency may reject a Grand Jury recommendation provided they include an explanation of why the recommendation is either unwarranted or unreasonable. If a recommendation requires further analysis, it must be conducted within six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.

All Grand Jury reports and each agency’s responses are posted online each year at <https://www.slo.courts.ca.gov/gi/jury-grandjury.htm>

## **METHOD/PROCEDURE**

To prepare this report, the Grand Jury conducted interviews with several local fire and law enforcement professionals, as well as a County Supervisor. All interviewees had knowledge of local fireworks-related issues.

The Grand Jury reviewed local government meeting recordings and analyzed a variety of documents including:

- Local, county, and state fireworks codes
- Local ordinances
- Fire and police incident statistics
- News coverage
- National and state scientific studies, reports, and publications
- Other California civil grand jury reports on fireworks

The interviews were conducted in a private and confidential area. The Grand Jury selected interviewees based upon a general consensus that each person would provide facts and represent a viewpoint from their city or county department.

The Grand Jury requested documents from various sources representing fire and law enforcement departments.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Definitions**

California Health and Safety Code (HSC) § 12511, defines fireworks as “any device containing chemical elements and chemical compounds capable of burning independently of the oxygen of the atmosphere and producing audible, visual, mechanical, or thermal effects which are useful as pyrotechnic devices or for entertainment.” This includes, but is not limited to, devices “designated by the manufacturer as: fireworks, torpedoes, skyrockets, roman candles, rockets, Daygo bombs, sparklers, party poppers, paper caps, chasers, fountains, smoke sparks, aerial bombs, and fireworks kits.”<sup>4</sup>

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is the only authority in California (State) to classify fireworks. It tests, measures, and categorizes fireworks into one of three classifications:

- Dangerous
- Exempt
- “Safe and Sane”

“Dangerous fireworks” are characterized by their material composition, path of travel, type and intensity of discharge, burn duration, and other “characteristics of design or construction which make such fireworks unsafe for use by any person not specially qualified or trained in the use of fireworks.”<sup>5</sup> Only licensed professionals with a permit may possess, transport, or discharge these under specific conditions.

Exempt fireworks describe “any special item containing pyrotechnic compositions which the State Fire Marshal, with the advice of the State Fire Advisory Board, has investigated and determined to be limited to industrial, commercial, agricultural use, or religious ceremonies when authorized by a permit granted by the authority having jurisdiction.”<sup>6</sup>

Fireworks that do not fall under either of the above definitions are designated as “Safe and Sane.”<sup>7</sup> These are the only consumer fireworks approved for retail sale and private use in California. They must bear the official “Safe and Sane” seal of OSFM (Illustration 2). Just because fireworks have a “Safe and Sane” label does not make them legal everywhere. Local laws and ordinances further dictate where, when, and if they can be used.

**Illustration 2**



Official California  
Safe and Sane  
Fireworks Seal  
Source: California OSFM

As explained earlier in the Definitions section, the office of the State Fire Marshall, has classified one type of fireworks as “Safe and Sane” and has made that class of fireworks legal in California. That classification is actually misleading as these fireworks are only safe when used correctly. Unfortunately, once the “Safe and Sane” fireworks are sold, it is difficult to control how they are used. When misused, these fireworks can have impacts just as serious as those from fireworks classified as “Dangerous” and illegal in the State.

### **Local Government and Laws**

The County and nearly all the incorporated cities therein operate as general law entities whereby the California Government Code dictates certain aspects of how they are organized and operate. The City of San Luis Obispo (SLO) is the exception.

As a charter city, SLO has more autonomy and flexibility in governance structure and municipal powers than a general law city. SLO follows its own voter-approved charter (akin to a city constitution) so long as it does not conflict with the State’s general statutes and regulations.

This distinction is noteworthy because general law entities are generally bound to State definitions, punishment ranges, etc. For example, a first-time fireworks offense is subject to a fine up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) in unincorporated County areas, consistent with State law.<sup>8</sup> That same fireworks violation in SLO would carry a penalty of up to two thousand dollars (\$2,000).<sup>9</sup>

### **Fireworks Allowed in the County**

Within the County, all types of unpermitted fireworks usage are illegal except in the following cities/towns:

- Arroyo Grande
- Grover Beach
- San Miguel
- Templeton

These communities have either a local fire district or a CSD that provide fire protection. This enables the local governing body to enact an ordinance that allows for the public sale and use of “Safe and Sane” fireworks within its own jurisdiction.

Most of these cities/towns restrict the use of fireworks to less than a single day – the Fourth of July until 10:00 PM. San Miguel lets fireworks go off from noon on July 1st until 10:00 PM on the Fourth of July. Therefore, unpermitted use of any type of fireworks outside of these narrow timeframes is illegal, including in the areas that allow “Safe and Sane” fireworks.

Despite these restrictions, data collected from these four communities and others show that fireworks-related incidents occur throughout the year reaching a peak during the entire month of July – not just around the Fourth of July holiday. See Appendix B.

### **Empirical Data**

The Grand Jury obtained 2021-2025 data from Computer-Aided Dispatch systems throughout the County to better understand the impact of fireworks on first responders. The data include some of the most populous cities, towns and unincorporated areas representing the north, south, and central coastal regions of the County.

The data reveal two times the number of fire incidents happening in July compared to a monthly average over the rest of the year. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of all fireworks-related incidents also occur in July. See Appendix C. While this implies a correlation between fire and fireworks incidents, more information is needed to establish causality. Hotter weather, low humidity, and drier vegetation in summer undoubtedly all contribute to this uptick according to the OSFM. Overall, the number of fires caused by fireworks in the County is low compared to the entire State. See Appendix C.

### **Fires Caused by Fireworks**

Fireworks have consistently ignited fires in the County. See Appendix D, Table 3. Over the past six years, statistics from the OSFM reveal an average of nearly two fires per year with an estimated cumulative total of almost \$11 million dollars in property and content loss in San Luis Obispo County. See Appendix D, Table 4. These figures may underrepresent the actual contribution of fireworks because evidence of a fire's origin is often destroyed by the resulting flames, leaving some fire investigations with inconclusive findings.<sup>10</sup>

### **Calls for Service (CFS)**

If fireworks cause fire, injuries, or present an immediate hazard, then a 911 call for emergency services is the appropriate method to obtain a response. Otherwise, government agencies encourage the public to call local non-emergency lines to report illegal fireworks usage. Both types of calls route to a local or regional dispatch center where they generate a CFS. The CFS are prioritized and directed to law enforcement, fire protection services, emergency medical services, or a combination of these responders based on the nature of the incident.

Total CFS average 27,607 per year aggregating the cities/towns in the data set. Of these, fireworks CFS comprise 0.4% of the total. Sometimes, a fireworks-related call comes in as a noise complaint (e.g., someone hears a loud bang). Including all noise CFS in the calculation, the proportion of fireworks CFS could rise to 3.2% of total CFS. See Appendix B. The actual value is between these end points because some noise complaints could have nothing to do with fireworks (e.g., a call about an escalating argument in a domestic violence dispute).

### **Citations**

Each city/town in the Grand Jury's data sample issued from 1,108 to 7,090 citations per year from 2021 to 2025. Only 0.01% of these were for fireworks violations. Communities that allow

fireworks on the Fourth of July issued an average of nine fireworks citations per year while those that prohibit them issued on average of three per year. See Appendix B. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the fireworks citations were issued in July 2025.

### **Calls for Service vs. Citations**

With an annual average of 572 fireworks calls and 775 noise complaints (including those from fireworks) per city/town, the ratio of fireworks citations to fireworks CFS stood at 2.5% overall. Between July 3 and 6 this increases to 5.5%, reflecting rising enforcement in the days before, during, and after the Fourth of July holiday when fireworks activity is highest. See Appendix B.

### **Responsibilities**

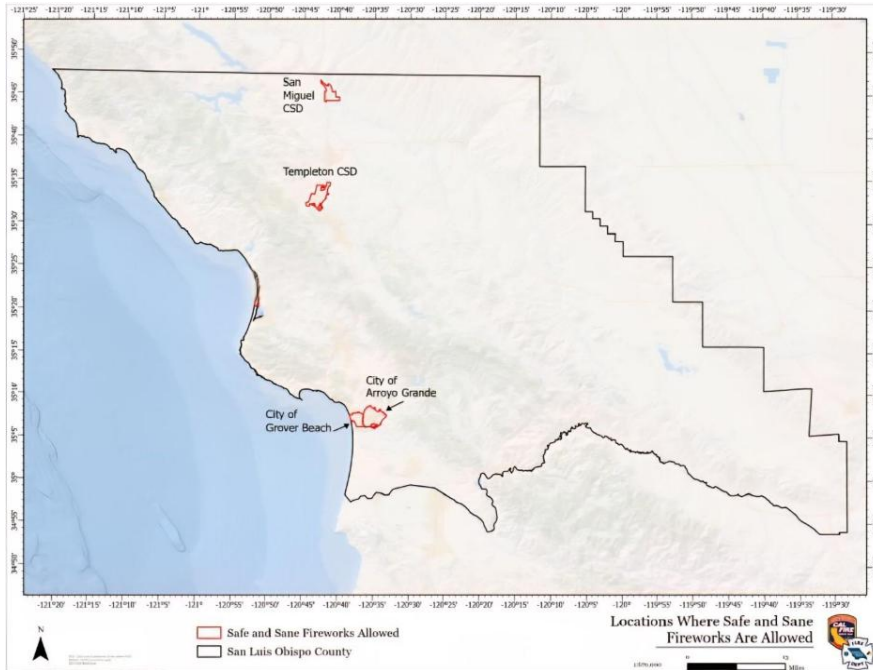
The fire department/district responds to all fires, including those started by fireworks. If a fire department/district has a certified arson investigator who is a sworn peace officer, the person is trained and equipped to also enforce fireworks laws. Otherwise, the County Sheriff and city police departments enforce fireworks laws in their primary local responsibility areas. Civil citations under the new social host ordinances can be issued by code enforcement officers and others designated by the County.

### **Challenges**

While the County Sheriff is responsible for law enforcement of roughly 44% of the population, its geographic coverage area encompasses more than 97% of the County. Similarly, the CAL FIRE/County Fire Department provides fire protection to about 46% of the population, covering more than 97% of the land area within County borders.

Illustration 3 displays the coverage challenges the County faces with logistics, mobilization, diverse terrain, and physical accessibility further complicating the situation. <sup>11</sup>

### Illustration 3



Locations where " Safe and Sane" fireworks are allowed  
in San Luis Obispo County as of January 2026

## NARRATIVE

### PROBLEMS WITH FIREWORKS

#### Physical Injuries and Deaths caused by Fireworks

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)<sup>12</sup> has operated as an independent U.S. federal regulatory agency formed in 1972 to protect the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death associated with thousands of types of consumer products, such as toys, cribs, power tools, and household chemicals. It has reported annually on fireworks-related deaths and emergency department-treated injuries.

The table below shows their findings and report data for the years 2020 through 2024.

**Table 2**

CPSC Data Year	Fireworks-related deaths	Fireworks-related injuries *	Sparkler injuries	Firecracker injuries
2020	12	15,600	900	1,600
2021	7	11,500	1,100	1,500
2022	9	10,200	600	1,300
2023	7	9,700	800	700
2024	11	14,700	1,700	unreported

\*Most frequently injured body parts were hands and fingers (36%), and head, face, and ears (22%). Burns were the most common injury, making up 37% of all emergency room visits.

### **Fires**

In 2025, an official at the OSFM explained that illegal fireworks are a serious problem in California, causing injuries, property damage, and fires.

CAL FIRE data show that fireworks caused on average 1,290 fires every year in the State from 2020 to 2024. These fires have burned a total of 13,770 acres causing an aggregate property and content loss estimated at \$74 million. The same official noted that we are on this trend of increased explosions and injuries caused by illegal fireworks, which is why there is a continued zero tolerance related to illegal fireworks. See Appendix C.

What is sometimes lost in understanding the problem is that fires are not necessarily caused only by illegal fireworks. Fires can be caused by a mere spark, of which even “Safe and Sane” fireworks also qualify.

The table from the CAL FIRE webpage in Appendix E shows the damage of all wildfires in 2025 that occurred in unincorporated areas of the County. Not included in the CAL FIRE data in

Appendix E are fires within incorporated cities or CSDs responded to by their own fire departments.

The Templeton Feed & Grain fire was caused by illegal fireworks on the Fourth of July 2025. A local fire official commented that the fire created a dangerous situation, with football-sized embers flying onto rooftops of neighboring businesses and into nearby vegetation. The cost of the arson fire is estimated to be \$700,000.

Another Central Coast structure fire happened on July 5, 2024, in Arroyo Grande. According to the Five Cities Fire Authority's (FCFA) investigation report, its investigator found mortar tubes used to launch illegal fireworks at the home and remnants of fireworks (one OSFMS-approved) that had been improperly disposed of within a plastic trash can.

The FCFA investigator stated in his report that there were verified reports that illegal fireworks had been set off from in front and behind the home on the Fourth of July 2024. The official cause of the fire was classified by FCFA as unintentional/accidental due to the improper disposal of fireworks.

### **Impacts on Animals**

Another impact of fireworks is how noise affects animals. Pets are affected by panic due to fireworks and the dual threat of summer heat. Animals not kept far away from fireworks can become frightened or injured. Leftover debris from exploded fireworks is often toxic to animals and can cause choking if ingested.<sup>13</sup>

A local example of the danger to animals that fireworks can pose was reported on July 3, 2025, when a foal died because of panic caused by fireworks. For this Paso Robles family, their horses began frantically running and jumping after hearing nearby fireworks. Rosie, their three-month-old foal, ran into a pipe fence and dropped to the ground. After a thorough examination, a veterinarian determined her neck was broken in multiple places and she had to be put down.<sup>14</sup>

More pets go missing on the Fourth of July than on any other day of the year. Fireworks and loud celebrations can startle even the calmest cats and dogs, causing them to panic and run. An analysis from Shelter Animals Count shows that the days surrounding the Fourth of July consistently bring the highest surge in stray dog intakes each year.<sup>15</sup>

### **Noise and Injury Impacts on People**

Fireworks create a variety of negative impacts on some people, including hearing loss and emotional trauma for those who are noise sensitive. For some veterans and people with autism and auditory sensitivity, the booms, bangs, and lights of fireworks can trigger sensory overload, fear, and flashbacks.

Any exposure to excessively loud noise can cause hearing loss and, once it occurs, it may be irreversible. A single loud blast or explosion that lasts for less than a second can cause immediate and possibly permanent hearing loss. Firecrackers can generate 150 decibel peak pressure at a distance of three feet, which is considered painful to the ears and is well beyond the safe listening level of 70 decibels.<sup>16</sup>

The California Department of Veterans Affairs estimates the County veteran population at 15,468 as of 2025.<sup>17</sup> For veterans living with PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), the Fourth of July can be filled with trauma. For some veterans, fireworks can bring up memories of combat or explosions, intense fires or gun violence and may create strong reactions to the sounds and lights they experience, causing flashbacks and distress.<sup>18</sup>

### **Breathing Hazards**

Inhaling fireworks fumes exposes the body to toxic heavy metals, chemical pollutants, and elevated levels of fine particulate matter which can cause immediate respiratory irritation, asthma attacks, heart palpitations, and, with prolonged exposure, long-term risks like reduced

lung function and cardiovascular issues. Smoke from fireworks contains hazardous substances such as lead, copper, strontium, and barium. See Appendix F.

### **Indirect Economic Impacts**

The potential for fireworks to cause fires contributes to the risk of fire damage in the County. In 2025, CAL FIRE updated fire hazard severity zone (FHSZ) maps to improve public safety. In the prior map, 38 parcels in County resided in a FHSZ. The new map assigns 8,782 parcels to a FHSZ, with 2,845 parcels in the very high zone in Appendix G.

With a preponderance of wildland urban interface areas, San Luis Obispo ranks in the top 36th percentile of California counties that are most disadvantaged, qualifying for residential property insurance based on a March 2025 listing by the California Department of Insurance.

Commercial insurers issued fewer new homeowner policies and did not renew existing policies leaving the voluntary insurance marketplace stagnant. Meanwhile under the California Fair Access to Insurance Requirements (FAIR) Plan – the State’s safety net to ensure homeowners have access to basic fire insurance, the count of “new policies” rose exponentially from 2021 to 2023. The “number of renewed policies” grew at a year-over-year average of 57% clarifying how hard it is for property owners in the County to move off the State’s insurance plan of last resort. See Appendix H.

### **Fireworks Sales in the County**

It was reported to the Grand Jury and discussed in local news outlets that a few communities allow nonprofit organizations to sell “Safe and Sane” fireworks for fundraising.<sup>19</sup> The presence of retail fireworks activity may confuse consumers as to which fireworks are legal and where they can be used.

## **ENFORCEMENT ISSUES**

### **Illegal Fireworks Penalties**

State Code established penalties for use of dangerous fireworks (not “Safe and Sane”) including various fines and/or imprisonment depending on the violation. Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 12700 indicates the punishment for possession of dangerous fireworks. It states that upon conviction a person who is in possession of less than 25 pounds of dangerous fireworks is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$1,000 or more than \$2,000 and/or be imprisoned in the county jail for a time not exceeding one year. Upon a second or subsequent conviction, a person shall be punished with a fine of not less than \$2,000 and/or imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year.<sup>20</sup>

Section 12700 also includes the penalty for people who have been convicted of possessing more than 25 pounds of unaltered dangerous fireworks. The fine and the imprisonment imposed in county jail or state prison (felony) depends upon how many pounds were in possession. The fine can be \$1,000 to more than \$20,000; the imprisonment from one year in county jail to three years in state prison.<sup>21</sup> The most applicable codes relating to possession, selling, discharging, or igniting are outlined in Appendix I.

### **SLO County Ordinances**

County Ordinance No. 3296 that addresses fireworks was adopted on April 21, 2015. It amended “Chapter 6.32 Fireworks” in its entirety; however, no specific penalties were established in the County Code. On July 16, 2024, the County Board of Supervisors voted to create a Fireworks Ad Hoc Committee<sup>22</sup> which led to the updated version, County Code, Title 6.32 on May 20, 2025, to include sections 6.32.088 through 6.32.98 40. See Appendix J.

### **County Fireworks Ad Hoc Committee (Committee)**

The Committee was created in response to a high volume of constituent concerns regarding the use of illegal fireworks. Committee members include County Supervisors, as well as County departmental representatives from County Fire, Sheriff’s Office, Planning and Building, and

County Counsel. Other key stakeholders include the Five Cities Fire Authority and the Fire Safe Counsel.

The goal of the Committee is to address the use of illegal fireworks, including evaluating and developing fireworks-related code enforcement strategies, potential enforcement methods, and associated challenges for the unincorporated areas of the County under the County's fire authority.

The Committee developed several enforcement strategies to strengthen the implementation of existing provisions in the County Fireworks Code including penalties for violations and implementing a social host, minor, and spectator liability adopted on May 20, 2025. See Appendix J.

### **Social Host Ordinances**

A social host statute or ordinance imposes liability on individuals who permit, allow, or host an event or an illegal activity that causes disturbance to the community. As an effort to control a variety of public nuisance issues, including fireworks, several cities in California have initiated social host ordinances.

The City of SLO has Social Host Ordinance 9.13, "Unruly Gatherings," adopted in 2010. The Ordinance is not exclusive to fireworks but does include subsections 9.13.020(b) defining responsible persons and 9.13.020 (e) which applies to the setting off fireworks.<sup>23</sup>

The City of Grover Beach adopted a new Social Host Ordinance under Article 3, Chapter 12, Sections 3996.1-3996.7 in 2025 to specifically "regulate social hosts who allow illegal fireworks."<sup>24</sup> Its purpose is to establish host liability, define citation process, and establish fines for violations.

The County adopted Section 6.32.088(a) of the County Code, Social Host Ordinance, specific to fireworks on May 20, 2025. This section states that any social host shall be strictly liable for any violation of this chapter [Fireworks] occurring at the social host's property or gathering.<sup>25</sup>

Even with the implementation of social host ordinances, some cities still support the sale of "Safe and Sane" fireworks, which means neighboring cities can have opposing views and laws relative to both sales and use of "Safe and Sane" fireworks. This divergence can compound the problem of compliance and enforcement of ordinances.

### **Detection**

Citizen complaints have traditionally alerted public officials to the use of illegal fireworks in areas where no fireworks are allowed. Over the last few years, technology has improved detection by using drones which can spot aerial fireworks over a very large area. Some drones used by law enforcement also detect the detonation of firecrackers in the same way that gunshots are detected and located. Learning from the experiences of other communities can yield cost-effective solutions.

The City of Grover Beach has deployed drones which are used around the Fourth of July to locate the use of illegal fireworks so that police can be directed to the location in order to issue citations and confiscate unused fireworks.<sup>26</sup>

The City of Lompoc contracts for fireworks detection with a local company that provides manned aircraft that can spot illegal fireworks over a large area using infrared sensors; focus in on the location, identify the parcel number, and then photograph the activity so that citations can be mailed to the offenders in the future.<sup>27</sup>

### **Enforcement**

Criminal citations for the illegal use of fireworks are issued by the County Sheriff's deputies or local police within a city limit. CAL FIRE also has law enforcement officers who can issue criminal

citations for illegal fireworks, but they have to cover the whole County with only a handful of enforcement officers. Some city fire departments also have investigators authorized to issue criminal citations. All of these officers also have the authority to confiscate any illegal fireworks. According to the SLO Tribune, between July 3rd and 6th of last year, over 600 pounds of illegal fireworks were seized by officers.<sup>28</sup>

Under the new social host ordinance approved by the County Board of Supervisors in 2025, employees of the Department of Planning and Building are now authorized to issue notices of civil code violations and fines. Several cities within the County have passed social host ordinances of their own which allow their building code enforcement personnel to also issue citations for the use of illegal fireworks.

This new civil ordinance is a valuable tool used to fight illegal fireworks. Under the criminal statute, a law enforcement officer can only cite the individual who sets off the fireworks. Under the new civil ordinance, if illegal fireworks are used, the owner (or renter) of a home within 200 feet of the fireworks can be cited, as well as any spectators. The civil ordinance also makes the parents responsible for use of illegal fireworks by minors.

As a potentially valuable new tool, its effectiveness has yet to be proven. This ordinance does allow appeals of a citation to a County Hearing Officer. It will be important to track the success of any appeal in order to identify how enforcement action needs to change to ensure that citations are upheld and fines collected. This can be done. A story in the Wall Street Journal on December 28, 2025, has a good example of how one community is using drones to help with enforcement:

“This past Fourth of July, three Elk Grove drones darted across the city to record video of illegal fireworks. A code-enforcement officer sat next to a drone pilot writing out tickets and verifying who owned or leased a property. The city has issued hundreds of tickets over the past two years but has only lost two appeals.”<sup>29</sup>

To be successful in abolishing illegal fireworks, the County, Cities, and CSDs need to work together to enforce applicable laws. One challenge is that illegal activity primarily takes place one or two days of the year. Having enough law enforcement officers on those two days would be inefficient and expensive to cover with full-time personnel. Unfortunately, the usual practice of relying on developing mutual aid agreements is less effective in bringing in staff from other counties, since all counties are experiencing the same increased staffing needs on the same days.

The Grand Jury had the opportunity to interview several law enforcement and fire department officials. One fireworks issue that was consistent in the interviews was the lack of resources and staffing. Officials articulated concerns about the Fourth of July including the number of calls for service, personnel to cover events, and maintaining enough staff for calls and services unrelated to fireworks. The County and City agencies pull resources from all over the County when needed, and they may lose response capabilities in many of their areas. The Grand Jury learned that law enforcement staffing for one community was sparse on the Fourth of July. An event with approximately 10,000 attendees had only six staff assigned. In another area, on the Fourth of July, one dispatch unit received over 200 calls in an hour.

Another issue discussed with County and city officials which may impact the resources and staffing availability is how the use of fireworks has increased over time. One official pointed out that in Oceano and Nipomo the use of fireworks has increased, beginning several days leading up to the Fourth of July and four days after. Other comments made by officials reflect that, as the population grows, the use of fireworks grows. Coastal communities have more visitors coming into the area during the Fourth of July period, increasing the number of fireworks used. It is noted that one official's opinion was that the use of fireworks has increased over the last seven or eight years, and in particular, aerial fireworks have become a lot more common. In one community, an official remarked that during a recent year there were so many fireworks going off that smoke covered the street, almost to the point where you could not see the next block. The officials agree that they want to be able to crack down and eliminate the illegal fireworks.

## **Control of Supply**

The enforcement problem is exacerbated with an uncontrolled supply available for sale primarily just across the California State line. California law enforcement has recognized this for a long time and created a task force titled the General Fireworks Advisory Committee (GFAC). To address the shared issues of illegal fireworks, the GFAC is comprised of members from CAL FIRE Service, local fire departments, among others. Interestingly, there was no one from law enforcement listed on this committee. <sup>30</sup>

The GFAC has been meeting since 2019 on a roughly quarterly basis. The minutes of their meetings are available online. In the process of establishing their scope and intent, their discussions sought an opportunity to work with the comparable staff from the State of Nevada. The plan they created was to generate a “white paper” compact with Nevada for the sharing of information about the individuals buying fireworks that are illegal in California from vendors in Nevada. The idea is to cut off the supply of those fireworks at the point of sale, rather than at the point of combustion. Initially, it appears they were making headway with all parties supporting the effort, but the compact needed to require the support of the Nevada legislature, which did not support the cross-state compact legislation. <sup>31</sup>

What did happen at the GFAC September 2025 meeting was the creation of a new committee titled the Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force. The work of this new task force will be to increase public awareness of proper procedures, raise penalties for violations, and look for ways to improve coordination among local, state, and federal agencies. This new task force was prompted by the deadly Esparto fireworks warehouse explosion in Yolo County on July 1, 2025. <sup>32</sup>

## **Public Education**

Efforts are ongoing throughout the County and cities, and especially around the Fourth of July, to educate the public about the real fire danger and personal injuries associated with fireworks use. At a recent County Board of Supervisors meeting, the County Public Information Officer (PIO) detailed the components of their efforts including the following:

- Press releases via local media agencies
- Inclusion of San Joaquin valley towns and agencies
- Produced public service announcements in video and radio formats
- Created signage for Cayucos and Oceano using Honor Farm crews
- Electronic messaging in Cayucos and Oceano for recent changes in laws
- Ongoing efforts need to stress the severe penalties for the illegal use of fireworks

## **OTHER FORMS OF CELEBRATION**

### **Alternatives to Personal Fireworks**

Cities, towns, and counties are all now working toward alternative means of celebrating the Fourth of July. Websites announce and social media provides links to these alternatives. Additionally, there are those who promote alternatives as a way to support their ecological beliefs. These include:

Reduced Air Pollution: Drones and lasers do not produce smoke or particulate matter, significantly reducing air pollution and its associated health risks.

No Fire Hazards: Unlike fireworks, drones and lasers do not pose a fire risk, making them safer for dry and wildfire-prone areas.

Less Noise Pollution: Fireworks can be very loud, which can be distressing for pets, wildlife, and people with noise sensitivities. Drones and laser shows can be designed to be quieter, making them more inclusive for everyone.

Several cities and events have successfully implemented drone and laser shows as part of their celebrations. For example, Tahoe City, California, replaced their Fourth of July fireworks with a

drone show last year to reduce the risk of wildfires and protect air quality. The show was well received and highlighted how technology can create a safe and memorable celebration.

### **FINDINGS:**

- F1. Despite their efforts, County and local governments have been ineffective in controlling the use of illegal fireworks, including in known hotspots for fireworks activity.
- F2. All fireworks, including “Safe and Sane,” are potentially dangerous if not used properly.
- F3. The potential impacts of careless use of fireworks are amplified by the hotter environment the County is continuing to experience.
- F4. There is a patchwork of regulations within the County that can potentially lead to confusion as to where and which fireworks are legal for the public to use.
- F5. Current resource levels are insufficient for County law enforcement and fire protection services to stem the use of illegal fireworks, resulting in increasing the risk of fire and safety hazards.
- F6. Considering the size of the problem and the need to issue citations as a means of deterrent, the small number of citations issued in 2025 appears to be disproportionate to the reported use of illegal fireworks.
- F7. The sources of illegal fireworks extend beyond the local law enforcement’s jurisdiction requiring engagement with other State and Federal agencies for enforcement.
- F8. The introduction of social host ordinances in the County shows potential for reducing a number of community issues, including the improper use of fireworks, especially when combined with the use of drones for enforcement.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors work with the committee of fire and law enforcement officials representing the County, and also each city, and CSD, to reevaluate whether all fireworks should be banned throughout the County including the four locations where they are now allowed.

- R2. The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors adopt a process before the end of 2026 to annually evaluate the need for surge support to law enforcement and fire preventions services to effectively suppress illegal fireworks activities during the most problematic times of the year.
- R3. The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors work with the Cities and CSDs to develop and facilitate the publication and distribution of educational materials in English and in Spanish on the dangers and harm of fireworks, as well as the laws and penalties associated with illegal fireworks use. This may include material focusing on fireworks safety for children.
- R4. The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors direct that local fire and law enforcement departments become more actively engaged in the statewide committees involved with controlling the influx of illegal fireworks into the County.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors is required to respond to F1 - F8 and R1 – R4 within 90 days of the published date of this report.

All responses shall be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Luis Obispo County Superior Court. A paper copy and an electronic version of all responses shall be provided to the Grand Jury.

#### **933.05. Findings and Recommendations**

- (a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
- (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
  - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding; in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
- (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

- (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
- (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
- (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

Presiding Judge	Grand Jury
Presiding Judge Tana Coates Superior Court of California 1035 Palm Street Room 355 San Luis Obispo, CA 93408	San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury P.O. Box 4910 San Luis Obispo, CA 93403

## Appendix A

### Climate Change Impacts

2025 ranked as the third-warmest year since global records began in 1850. The annual global surface temperature was 2.11°F (1.17°C) above the 20th-century average, falling behind the record-setting year of 2024 (by 0.22°F/0.12°C) and the second-warmest year, 2023 (by 0.04°F/0.02°C). The 10 warmest years in the historical record have all occurred since 2015, with 2025 exceeding the pre-industrial average by 2.41°F (1.34°C).<sup>33</sup>

In California, researchers at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography have found that the number of wildfires could grow significantly over the next 40 years. With increasing summer temperatures, the area burned by wildfires has risen fivefold from 1972 to 2018. Warmer summer temperatures and climate-driven aridity are likely to fuel more wildfires in the future. One Fourth Assessment model predicts that large wildfires (greater than 25,000 acres) could become 50% more frequent by the end of the century if emissions are not reduced, and the average area burned statewide would increase 77 percent.<sup>34</sup>

Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) indicates that San Luis Obispo County (County) is getting hotter, with average annual temperatures rising by approximately 0.2 degrees Fahrenheit per decade since 1895. This warming trend has resulted in hotter, longer summers, drier conditions, more frequent extreme heat waves, and a longer fire season.<sup>35</sup> Climate change is evident in the number of fire incidents in the County in 2025. Eighteen fires burned a total of 166,875 acres. This number includes the Gifford Fire, which was split between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, burning 83,846 acres in the County alone.<sup>36</sup>

A meteorologist and environmental specialist points out as the atmosphere warms, more severe droughts and floods will continue to develop depending on the dew point and air temperatures. If the dew point temperatures are low and air temperatures high, which is so often the case in California during summer and fall, more of the rain that falls will evaporate before reaching the ground. Consequently, this reduces soil moisture and stream flows. Not only does this provide less water for trees and other vegetation, but it also allows the air to remove more moisture directly from the plants, creating bone-dry surface fuels. This condition combined with other factors has dramatically increased the severity of wildfires.<sup>37</sup>

**Appendix B (part 1 of 3)**

APPENDIX B Law Enforcement CAD Data			2021			2022			2023			2024			2025		
SLO County Region	“Safe & Sane” Fireworks	Description CFS=Call for Service	Total Annual	Month of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	Month of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	Month of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	Month of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	Month of July	July 3-6
North	Prohibits	Total CFS	38,688	4,030	408	40,608	3,698	419	39,126	3,764	388	39,834	4,153	469	47,982	4,800	497
North	Prohibits	Fireworks CFS	195	129	97	154	90	59	242	153	96	225	136	78	163	73	31
North	Prohibits	Noise CFS	743	71	7	660	74	6	655	62	4	653	47	5	519	43	9
North	Prohibits	Total Citations	2,473	295	4	3,246	344	26	3,382	301	11	2,736	298	42	4,203	418	33
North	Prohibits	Fireworks Citations	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
North	Prohibits	Total CFS	20,473	2,215	307	22,500	1,939	200	19,583	2,205	249	18,685	1,988	247	17,217	1,857	233
North	Prohibits	Fireworks CFS	189	135	119	157	112	88	92	51	36	128	86	78	113	75	67
North	Prohibits	Noise CFS	108	13	2	107	5	-	88	9	-	88	6	-	79	10	2
North	Prohibits	Total Citations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	74	9	1
North	Prohibits	Fireworks Citations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
South	Prohibits	Total CFS	29,689	2,916	461	26,978	2,842	414	19,518	1,676	193	19,300	2,087	324	22,614	2,237	319
South	Prohibits	Fireworks CFS	65	41	34	58	37	26	22	15	5	47	27	26	40	13	8
South	Prohibits	Noise CFS	855	72	11	710	96	13	585	85	14	718	82	10	797	72	17
South	Prohibits	Total Citations	2,931	258	28	2,636	272	57	2,534	271	12	2,896	355	48	2,142	329	35
South	Prohibits	Fireworks Citations	3	1	1	4	2	2	1	-	-	3	3	2	3	2	2

**Appendix B (part 2 of 3)**

South	Prohibits	Total CFS	23,258	2,417	334	22,913	2,184	302	22,775	2,180	229	20,868	2,050	262	19,914	1,855	298
South	Prohibits	Fireworks CFS	361	198	163	312	187	136	215	107	101	268	136	97	277	161	115
South	Prohibits	Noise CFS	96	7	-	88	6	1	84	13	2	87	16	2	52	7	1
South	Prohibits	Total Citations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
South	Prohibits	Fireworks Citations	4	3	3	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	1	1	2	-	-
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Total CFS	37,636	3,266	317	36,980	3,032	271	36,325	3,142	320	35,763	2,986	248	35,225	2,984	291
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Fireworks CFS	78	41	34	81	28	17	80	27	17	90	25	8	101	41	27
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Noise CFS	1,916	145	22	1,910	127	15	1,782	92	10	1,853	83	7	1,866	68	6
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Total Citations	2,753	207	10	3,791	171	31	4,912	356	22	6,092	448	31	7,090	329	29
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Fireworks Citations	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Total CFS	23,338	2,245	262	21,770	1,966	255	21,566	1,811	269	20,577	2,037	265	19,442	1,722	198
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Fireworks CFS	155	121	112	66	52	46	90	72	65	146	92	75	109	81	70
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Noise CFS	75	6	-	55	6	2	57	6	1	53	11	1	34	5	1
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Total Citations	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	250	32	5
Central/ Coastal	Prohibits	Fireworks Citations	-	-	-	3	3	3	-	-	-	2	2	2	1	-	-

**Appendix B (part 3 of 3)**

South	Allows	Total CFS	18,722	1,642	224	17,987	1,355	181	17,957	1,524	200	16,478	1,405	164	15,105	1,360	146
South	Allows	Fireworks CFS	124	70	52	87	64	48	44	19	7	56	29	21	71	38	22
South	Allows	Noise CFS	110	12	-	70	7	1	78	7	1	90	8	-	85	9	2
South	Allows	Total Citations	1,887	122	16	1,839	115	5	2,681	193	17	1,687	163	18	1,108	68	15
South	Allows	Fireworks Citations	3	3	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1
South	Allows	Total CFS	21,882	1,982	264	24,696	2,218	277	19,403	1,573	174	17,421	747	86	14,255	1,306	180
South	Allows	Fireworks CFS	129	35	18	186	103	70	286	52	45	99	26	18	135	82	40
South	Allows	Noise CFS	660	65	9	811	92	8	781	96	15	405	5	-	55	10	3
South	Allows	Total Citations	1,607	148	25	1,282	123	11	1,685	104	15	1,685	104	15	1,261	105	16
South	Allows	Fireworks Citations	10	9	9	5	4	3	7	6	6	8	8	8	17	15	11

Law Enforcement Calls for Service and Citation Data

Collected by the Grand Jury

*Source: Sheriff and Police Departments in San Luis Obispo County*

**Appendix C (part 1 of 3)**

Fire Department CAD Data			2021			2022			2023			2024			2025		
SLO County Region	“Safe & Sane” Fireworks	Description	Total Annual	All of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	All of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	All of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	All of July	July 3-6	Total Annual	All of July	July 3-6
South	Allows in 2 of 3 areas	Number of Fire Incidents	86	10	2	90	8	4	47	7	0	64	9	5	58	11	1
South	Allows in 2 of 3 areas	Fireworks-related Incidents	9	4	4	4	2	1	3	3	2	7	5	3	4	2	1
South	Allows in 2 of 3 areas	Number of Times No Apparatus Available	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
South	Allows in 2 of 3 areas	Fireworks Seizures (lbs.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North	Allows	Number of Fire Incidents	48	8	3	39	7	4	45	10	4	54	15	6	65	6	5
North	Allows	Fireworks-related Incidents	3	3	3	0	0	0	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4
North	Allows	Number of Times No Apparatus Available	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North	Allows	Firework Seizures (lbs.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

### Appendix C (part 2 of 3)

North	Allows	Number of Fire Incidents	346	31	2	339	54	10	336	28	9	289	45	9	263	24	7
North	Allows	Fireworks-related Incidents	1	1	1	3	3	3	0	0	0	5	5	5	2	2	2
North	Allows	Number of Times No Apparatus Available	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North	Allows	Fireworks Seizures (lbs.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	132	132	132	209	209	209	264	264	264	0	0	0
Central/ Coastal	Allowed when data collected	Number of Fire Incidents	52	4	1	34	5	1	33	2	0	72	15	4	44	5	1
Central/ Coastal	Allowed when data collected	Fireworks-related Incidents	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central/ Coastal	Allowed when data collected	Number of Times No Apparatus Available	30	5	0	19	1	0	12	0	0	9	1	0	19	5	1
Central/ Coastal	Allowed when data collected	Fireworks Seizures (lbs.)	17	15	2	8	8	0	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Appendix C (part 3 of 3)**

North	Prohibits	Number of Fire Incidents	138	24	1	185	33	11	138	26	3	161	36	7	134	20	5
North	Prohibits	Fireworks-related Incidents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
North	Prohibits	Number of Times No Apparatus Available	151	19	---	239	---	---	178	---	---	210	---	---	TBD	TBD	TBD
North	Prohibits	Fireworks Seizures (lbs.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North	Prohibits	Number of Fire Incidents	90	8	1	99	13	3	80	19	3	104	24	7	85	12	4
North	Prohibits	Fireworks-related Incidents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North	Prohibits	Number of Times No Apparatus Available	502	43	2	411	33	3	435	40	8	490	39	6	448	23	3
North	Prohibits	Fireworks Seizures (lbs.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Fire and Fireworks Incidents, Apparatus Availability and Seizure Data

Collected by the Grand Jury

*Source: Fire Departments/Districts/Authorities in San Luis Obispo County*

## Appendix D

**Table 3**

<b>Fireworks Fires in San Luis Obispo County</b>				
Year	Number of Fireworks Fires	Property Loss	Contents Loss	Acres Burned
2020	3.0	\$1,050	\$101,000	10.0
2021	1.0	\$15,000	\$15,000	0.0
2022	2.0	\$850	\$14,000	0.7
2023	1.0	\$400	\$4,000	1.3
2024	3.0	\$0	\$5,300	11.1
2025	1.0	\$800,000	\$10,000,000	5.1
Total	11.0	\$817,300	\$10,139,300	28.2
<i>Average</i>	1.8	\$1,050	\$101,000	4.7

Fires caused by fireworks as reported to OSFM by local fire departments

*Source: California Incident Data and Statistics Program (CalStats)<sup>38</sup>*

**Table 4**

<b>All Fireworks Fires Reported to the Office of the State Fire Marshal [in California]</b>				
Year	Number of Fireworks Fires	Property Loss	Contents Loss	Acres Burned
2020	2,057	\$8,084,000	\$2,174,000	3,202
2021	1,274	\$6,195,000	\$1,622,000	550
2022	1,080	\$8,586,000	\$2,476,000	4,934
2023	1,201	\$4,475,000	\$3,648,000	1,123
2024*	836	\$30,658,000	\$6,498,000	3,961
2025	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	6,448	\$60,540,000	\$17,121,000	13,770
<i>Average</i>	1,290	\$11,599,600	\$3,283,600	2,754

\* January 1 – September 30, 2024

Fireworks Fires in all 58 California Counties, from the

“2024 Fireworks Workload Analysis Report to the Legislature”.

*Source: OSFM, Fire Engineering & Investigations Division<sup>39</sup>*

## Appendix E

**Table 5**

<b>Incident</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Date started</b>	<b>Acres Consumed</b>
Alma Fire	San Luis Obispo	10/4/2025	107
Bitter Fire	San Luis Obispo	6/14/25	1651
Carlos Fire	San Luis Obispo	8/18/25	42
Chance Fire	San Luis Obispo	6/28/25	52
Creston Fire	San Luis Obispo	5/22/25	14
Donovan Fire	San Luis Obispo	8/2/25	51
Eagle Fire	San Luis Obispo	6/13/25	38
Energy Fire	San Luis Obispo	5/12/25	43
Hutton Fire	San Luis Obispo	8/28/25	20
Juan Fire	San Luis Obispo	6/5/25	24
Llano Fire	San Luis Obispo	6/28/25	20
Madre Fire	San Luis Obispo	7/2/25	80,779
Midway Fire	San Luis Obispo	8/4/25	13
Pilitas Fire	San Luis Obispo	6/20/25	20
Pozo Fire	San Luis Obispo	5/10/25	86
Rancho Fire	San Luis Obispo	7/5/25	28
Rosa Fire	San Luis Obispo	1/29/25	105
Walnut Fire	San Luis Obispo	9/5/25	14
Gifford Fire*	SLO and SB	8/1/25	83,846 / 47,871

Note\*: The Gifford Fire ignited on August 1, 2025, and burned ~131,600 acres.

The fire burned across San Luis Obispo County (83,850 acres) and  
Santa Barbara County (47,870 acres).

## Appendix F

### Chemical Consequences of Inhaling Fireworks Smoke

Fireworks generate huge concentrations of pollutants from colorants and explosives as well as from the metals and fuses that make up the fireworks themselves. Particulate matter (PM) pollutant concentrations can be up to eight times higher than normal in the hours right after a fireworks show. Fireworks release harmful pollutants into the air that can inflame your lungs, including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and carbon monoxide. Smoke can linger in the air for hours, but with potential for lingering health effects, and pose a serious health risk. Fireworks emit dangerous levels of fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) which includes soot, ash, and heavy metals. These pollutants can lead to health problems, especially for young children, older adults, and people with respiratory illnesses.<sup>40</sup>

Toxic fume inhalation causes symptoms like burning eyes/throat, coughing, wheezing, headache, dizziness, nausea, and shortness of breath, which can quickly progress to severe issues like confusion, chest pain, loss of consciousness, and respiratory failure, requiring immediate fresh air and medical attention. Specific chemicals can affect the nervous system, heart, or kidneys, leading to delayed or long-term effects, so prompt medical evaluation is crucial, even if symptoms seem mild. The particular issues include:

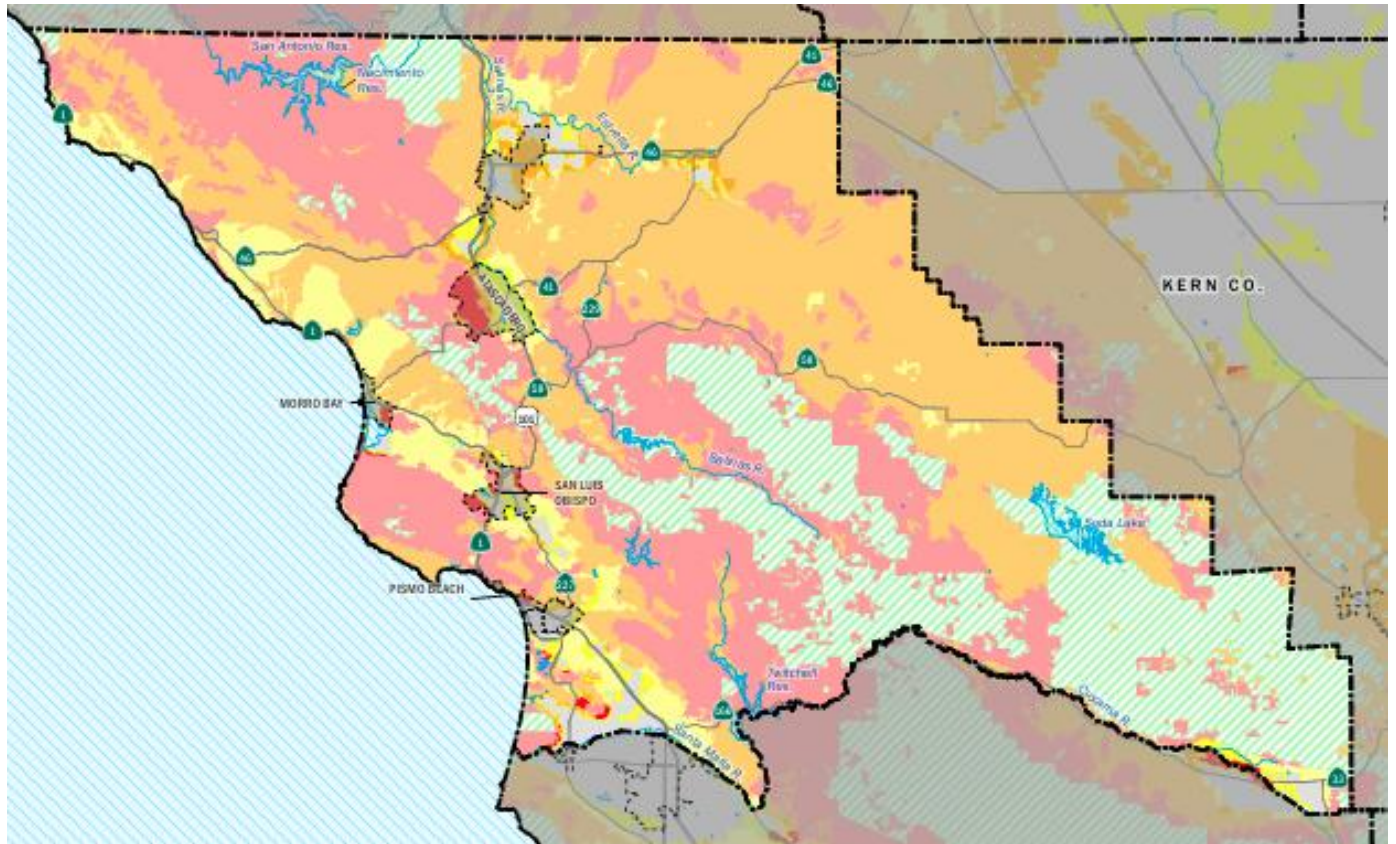
- **Heavy Metal Toxicity:** Fireworks contain metals used for colors (e.g., barium for green, strontium for red) that are released as breathable particles. Studies have identified toxic levels of lead and copper in smoke, which can affect human cells and lung tissue.
- **Respiratory Irritation:** The smoke contains sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, which act as irritants, triggering coughing, wheezing, and, in severe cases, bronchitis or laryngitis.
- **Particulate Matter - Exposure:** Fireworks produce a massive spike in fine particulate matter, which can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream. These particles can trigger asthma, worsen chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and cause inflammatory responses in the cardiovascular system.

- Cardiovascular Stress: Exposure to these toxins can lead to increased blood pressure, heart attacks, and arrhythmias.
- Carcinogenic Potential: While not directly linked to immediate cancer, the particulate matter is considered part of the pollution that can pose long-term risks to respiratory health.<sup>41</sup>

# Appendix G

## Illustration 3

### Fire Hazzard Safety Zone Map



**Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in Local Responsibility Area (LRA), as Identified by the State Fire Marshal**

Very High High Moderate

**Fire Hazard Severity Zones in State Responsibility Area (SRA), Effective April 1, 2024**

Very High High Moderate



Projection: NAD 83 California Teale Albers  
Scale: 1:712,000 at 11" x 17"

- Incorporated City
- Waterbody
- Unzoned LRA
- Federal Responsibility Area (FRA)

Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM)

Fire Hazzard Safety Zone Map of San Luis Obispo County 2025

## Appendix H

### Property Insurance

The State legislature established the California Fair Access to Insurance Requirements (FAIR) Plan as a safety net to ensure homeowners have access to basic fire insurance when traditional insurance companies are unwilling to offer coverage in high-risk areas. Coverage under the FAIR Plan is more expensive than commercial policies because the pools of insured properties are higher risk.

**Table 6**

<b>San Luis Obispo County</b>							
<b>Year</b>	<b>Voluntary Homeowners Insurance Market</b>				<b>California FAIR Plan</b>		
	<b>Number of New Policies</b>	<b>Number of Renewed Policies</b>	<b>Number of Non-Renewed Policies</b>	<b>Total Number of Policies</b>	<b>Number of New Policies</b>	<b>Number of Renewed Policies</b>	<b>Total Number of Policies</b>
2020	10,046	79,415	8,774	<b>98,235</b>	366	342	<b>708</b>
2021	10,722	79,285	9,732	<b>99,739</b>	374	550	<b>924</b>
2022	8,888	80,455	8,354	<b>97,697</b>	491	766	<b>1,257</b>
2023	6,805	81,110	7,102	<b>95,017</b>	824	1,018	<b>1,842</b>

Number of New, Renewed and Non-Renewed Homeowners Insurance Policies

Voluntary Market vs CA FAIR Plan

*Source: California Department of Insurance<sup>42</sup>*

Table 6 shows commercial insurers issued fewer “new homeowner policies” and did not renew existing policies in almost equal measure from 2020 to 2023. The number of “renewed policies” remained relatively flat over this period (~1% annual change), the combination of these impacts has the left voluntary insurance marketplace stagnant.

Meanwhile under the FAIR Plan, the count of “new policies” rose 17% in 2021, doubling to 36% the next year, and then tripling that increase to 106% in 2023. The “number of renewed policies” continues to grow substantially at a year-over-year average of 57% elucidating how hard it is for property owners to move off of the State’s insurance plan of last resort.

## Appendix I

### State Laws

The California fireworks laws are generally found in the California Health and Safety Code (HSC) Sections 12670 through 12690. Some of the more relevant laws are outlined below:

- HSC Section 12677 - It is unlawful for any person to possess dangerous fireworks without holding a valid perm<sup>43</sup>
- HSC Section 12676 – It is unlawful for any person to sell transfer, give, or deliver dangerous fireworks to anyone who does not hold a valid permit. Advertising any fireworks that have not been approved by the California State Fire Marshall is also unlawful<sup>44</sup>
- HSC Section 12680 makes it a crime to: Discharge or ignite dangerous fireworks near other people where there is a likelihood of injury to someone, or discharge or ignite dangerous fireworks willfully with the intent of creating chaos, fear or panic (with certain exemptions of people who have permits)<sup>45</sup>
- HSC Section 12689 makes it a crime to sell, give or deliver dangerous fireworks to a minor.<sup>46</sup>

## Appendix J

### San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Ordinances

#### Title 6-Business Licenses and Regulations Chapter 6.32 Fireworks

The updated SLO County Code Title 6.32 on fireworks was adopted on May 20, 2025, to include section 6.32.088 through 6.32.098.<sup>47</sup>

To summarize Section 6.32.082-098 codes:<sup>48</sup>

- Section 6.32.082, Penalties – Any person violating any of the provisions or failing to comply is deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and a public nuisance. Any person convicted of a misdemeanor shall be punished with a \$1,000 fine and/or imprisonment in the county jail for a period not to exceed 6 months.
- Section 6.32.084, Separate offenses – Each and every unpermitted fireworks discharge shall constitute a separate offense.
- Section 6.32.086, Definitions – Definitions relating to this chapter.
- Section 6.32.088(a), Social host - Any social host shall be strictly liable for any violation of this chapter occurring at the social host's property or gather. The definition of social host pursuant to Section 6.32.086 of Title 6 is "any owner of private property as listed on the most recent assessment roll; and or/ any person who has the right to use, possess or occupy a public or private property under a lease, permit, license, rental agreement, or contact; and or any person who hosts, organizes, supervises, officiates, conduct, or accepts responsibility for a gathering on public or private property."
- Section 6.32.088(b), Minor – Any person having the care, custody, or control of any minor who violates this chapter shall be strictly liable for the minor's violation of this chapter.
- Section 6.32.088(c) – It shall be unlawful for any person to be knowingly present as a spectator during an unpermitted fireworks discharge in violation of this chapter.

- Section 6.32.088(d) – No person who has the right to use, possess, or occupy a multifamily residential property under a lease, rental agreement, or contract shall be liable for violations of this chapter occurring in the common areas of the property.
- Section 6.32.090, Response cost.
- Section 6.32.091, Seizure of fireworks.
- Section 6.32.092, Notice of violation and administrative fine.
- Section 6.32.095, Appeal of notice of violation and administrative fine.
- Section 6.32.096, Administrative fine appeal process.
- Section 6.32.097, Notices of civil violations.
- Section 6.32.098, Right to judicial review.

## ENDNOTES:

---

<sup>1</sup> CAL FIRE Prevention - <https://www.fire.ca.gov/prevention>

<sup>2</sup> The Tribune – Templeton Feed & Grain fire -  
<https://www.sanluisobispo.com/news/local/article310102500.html>

<sup>3</sup> KSBY, 7/3/25, <https://www.ksby.com/paso-robles/paso-robles-family-urges-fireworks-safety-after-death-of-foal>

<sup>4</sup> State of California Health and Safety Code. Division 11. Explosives [12000 - 12761], Part 2. Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Devices [12500 – 127281], Chapter 1. General provisions and Definitions [12500 – 125341], Section 12511

<sup>5</sup> State of California Health and Safety Code, Division 11. Explosives [12000-12761], Part 2. Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Devices [12500 – 127281], Chapter 1. General Provisions and Definitions [12500 – 125341], Section 12505

<sup>6</sup> State of California Health and Safety Code, Division II. Explosives [12000 -12761], Part 2. Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Devices [12500 - 12728], Chapter 1. General Provisions and Definitions [12500 - 125341], Section 12508

<sup>7</sup> State of California Health and Safety Code, Division II. Explosives [12000 -12761], Part 2. Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Devices [12500 - 12728], Chapter 1. General Provisions and Definitions [12500 – 125341], section 12529

<sup>8</sup> State of California Health and Safety Code, Division II. Explosives [12000-12761], Part 2. Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Devices [12500 – 127281], Chapter 1. General Provisions and Definitions [12500 – 125341], section 12700

<sup>9</sup> City of SLO – Fireworks illegal -  
<https://www.slocity.org/Home/Components/News/News/11238/>

<sup>10</sup> Based on Grand Jury interviews with multiple fire authorities in San Luis Obispo County. Grand jury proceedings, including interviews are confidential pursuant to California Penal Code Sections 924—924.3 and 939.

---

<sup>11</sup> CAL FIRE / San Luis Obispo County Fire Department - National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) incident data reported by local California fire departments to the Office of the State Fire Marshall Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Incidents dated 1/1/2020 to 12/31/2025. Incidents with mutual aid given or automatic aid given to a neighboring fire department are not included. Fireworks Fires = National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Incident Type codes 100-173, 561: Fire: Unauthorized burning AND NFIRS Heat Source Code 50; Explosives, Fireworks, other and 54; Fireworks, includes sparklers, paper caps, party poppers, and firecrackers OR CAL FIRE Incident Reporting System (CAI-FIRS) Wildfire

<sup>12</sup>The Consumer Product Safety Commission - <https://www.cpsc.gov/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/Fireworks>

<sup>13</sup> Fireworks hazards for animals - <https://www.achwalnutcreek.com/is-your-yard-still-safe-for-pets/>

<sup>14</sup> KSBY, 7/3/25, <https://www.ksby.com/paso-robles/paso-robles-family-urges-fireworks-safety-after-death-of-foal>

<sup>15</sup> Stray dog trend data - <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/stray-dog-intakes-spike-after-july-4th-new-data-from-shelter-animals-count-confirms/>

<sup>16</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, <https://www.asha.org/news/2023/july-4th-fireworks-safety-experts-share-simple-tips-for-hearing-protection>

<sup>17</sup> California Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/PublishingImages/Pages/Veteran-Demographics-/California%20Veteran%20Population%20by%20County.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, <https://www.va.gov/jackson-health-care/stories/when-fireworks-dont-feel-like-freedom-ptsd-awareness-and-coping-during-independence-day/>

<sup>19</sup> Safe and Sane sales - <https://www.ksby.com/news/local-news/safe-and-sane-fireworks-now-on-sale-in-parts-of-slo-sb-counties>

<sup>20</sup> California Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 12700 – 38 - <https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/health-and-safety-code/hsc-sect-12700/>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> SLO County Ad Hoc Fireworks Committee - <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/administrative-office/featured-news/2025/new-county-fireworks-ordinance-results-in-confiscations-and-citations>

- 
- <sup>23</sup> Host Ordinance - [https://groverbeach.org/DocumentCenter/View/16324/Item8\\_Illegal-Fireworks-Social-Host-Ordinance\\_05\\_27\\_2025](https://groverbeach.org/DocumentCenter/View/16324/Item8_Illegal-Fireworks-Social-Host-Ordinance_05_27_2025)
- <sup>24</sup> [https://groverbeach.org/DocumentCenter/View/16324/Item8\\_Illegal-Fireworks-Social-Host-Ordinance\\_05\\_27\\_2025](https://groverbeach.org/DocumentCenter/View/16324/Item8_Illegal-Fireworks-Social-Host-Ordinance_05_27_2025)
- <sup>25</sup> SLO Ordinance No. 3296 Chapter 6.32 – Fireworks  
[https://library.municode.com/ca/san\\_luis\\_obispo\\_county/ordinances/county\\_code?nodeId=1364641](https://library.municode.com/ca/san_luis_obispo_county/ordinances/county_code?nodeId=1364641)
- <sup>26</sup> Grover Beach City Council Staff Report June 23, 2025: Item7\_July-4th-Fireworks-Enforcement-Update\_062325
- <sup>27</sup> KSBY.com July 23, 2025 – City of Lompoc news - <https://www.ksby.com/lompoc-valley/lompoc-fire-department-uses-plane-surveillance-to-crack-down-on-illegal-fireworks>
- <sup>28</sup> Tribune article - 8/7/25 - "Did SLO County’s crackdown on July 4 fireworks work? See the stats"  
<https://www.sanluisobispo.com/news/local/article311600662.html>
- <sup>29</sup> *Wall Street Journal* on December 28, 2025 - <https://dronexl.co/2025/12/31/police-drone-programs-6000-nationwide/> and <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/law/a-police-drone-might-be-behind-your-next-ticket-c25ddf62?mod=Searchresults&pos=3&page=1>
- <sup>30</sup> Office of the State Fire Marshal – General Fireworks Advisory Committee - <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/committees/general-fireworks-advisory-committee>
- <sup>31</sup> GFAC Meeting minutes - [https://34c031f8-c9fd-4018-8c5a-4159cdf6b0d-cdn-endpoint.azureedge.net/-/media/osfm-website/committees/general-fireworks-advisory-committee/2026/gfac-meeting-minutes-final-\(20250915\).pdf?rev=11eaefc9d05f446292cd1ee62ab3e1ef&hash=8E165C85A1C2F5E19A95936F838DE58F](https://34c031f8-c9fd-4018-8c5a-4159cdf6b0d-cdn-endpoint.azureedge.net/-/media/osfm-website/committees/general-fireworks-advisory-committee/2026/gfac-meeting-minutes-final-(20250915).pdf?rev=11eaefc9d05f446292cd1ee62ab3e1ef&hash=8E165C85A1C2F5E19A95936F838DE58F)
- <sup>32</sup> The Sacramento Bee – CAL FIRE recommends tougher fireworks oversight - <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article314472094.html>
- <sup>33</sup> National Centers for Environmental Information – Temperature and precipitation Analysis – 2025 <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/news/global-climate-202513>
- <sup>34</sup> Scripps Institution of Oceanography – Climate change in California - <https://scripps.ucsd.edu/research/climate-change-resources/faq-climate-change-california>

---

<sup>35</sup> National Centers for Environmental Information – Climate rankings of Counties - <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/monitoring/climate-at-a-glance/county/rankings/CA-079/tmax/202408>

<sup>36</sup> CAL FIRE Incident Achieve – 2025 Gifford Fire - <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2025>

<sup>37</sup> [https://syvnews.com/john-lindsey-dew-point-temperatures-and-climate-change/article\\_88807c18-dbcc-532c-9057-52abda630f4f.html](https://syvnews.com/john-lindsey-dew-point-temperatures-and-climate-change/article_88807c18-dbcc-532c-9057-52abda630f4f.html)

<sup>38</sup> National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) incident data reported by local California fire departments to the Office of the State Fire Marshal Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Incidents dated 1/1/2020 to 12/31/2025. Incidents with mutual aid given or automatic aid given to a neighboring fire department are not included. Fireworks Fires = National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Incident Type codes 100-173, 561: Fire: Unauthorized burning AND NFIRS Heat Source Code 50; Explosives, Fireworks, other and 54; Fireworks, includes sparklers, paper caps, party poppers, and firecrackers OR CAL FIRE Incident Reporting System (CALFIRS) Wildfire Cause Subcategory codes: Fireworks. The statistics come from the Office of the State Fire Marshal’s (OSFM) California Incident Data and Statistics (CalStats) database. Property and contents loss figures, if included herein, are estimates only. These emergency incident statistics, including injury and death counts, are based only upon information submitted to the OSFM by participating California fire departments. Please note that apparent variations in incident counts and associated losses shown in this report may be solely due to fluctuations in the amount of data submitted to the OSFM. And while the incoming data is validated according to logical data rules, individual data elements are not always verified for accuracy.

<sup>39</sup> Cal Fire's “2024 Fireworks Workload Analysis Report to The Legislature” pursuant to Health & Safety Code 12556, a “one time” report produced by the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (Cal Fire) Office of The State Fire Marshal (OSFM), Fire Engineering & Investigations Division, excerpts from Table 5: All Fireworks Fires Reported to the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

<sup>40</sup> Health effects - [Fireworks | Air Quality and Health Effects | Wisconsin DNR](#)

<sup>41</sup> American Cancer Society - <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/latest-news/are-fireworks-bad-for-your-health.html>

<sup>42</sup>California Department of Insurance, “Residential-Insurance-Policy-Analysis-by-County-2020-to-2023-2.pdf”

<sup>43</sup> HSC 12677 - [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12677.&nodeTreePath=22.2.7&lawCode=HSC](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12677.&nodeTreePath=22.2.7&lawCode=HSC)

---

<sup>44</sup> California Code, HSC 12676-

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12676.&nodeTreePath=22.2.7&lawCode=HSC](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12676.&nodeTreePath=22.2.7&lawCode=HSC)

<sup>45</sup> California Code, HSC 12680

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12680.&nodeTreePath=22.2.7&lawCode=HSC](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12680.&nodeTreePath=22.2.7&lawCode=HSC)

<sup>46</sup> California Code, HSC 12689 –

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12689.&=&lawCode=HSC](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=12689.&=&lawCode=HSC)

<sup>47</sup> SLO County Board of Supervisors Hearing May 20, 2025, meeting minutes

[https://docs.google.com/qview?url=https%3A%2F%2Fslocounty.granicus.com%2FDocumentViewer.php%3Ffile%3Dslocounty\\_9594f5cca33c1ee2d465b81502c7e69e.pdf%26view%3D1&embedded=true](https://docs.google.com/qview?url=https%3A%2F%2Fslocounty.granicus.com%2FDocumentViewer.php%3Ffile%3Dslocounty_9594f5cca33c1ee2d465b81502c7e69e.pdf%26view%3D1&embedded=true)

<sup>48</sup> Chapter 6.32 – FIREWORKS/ County Code/San Luis Obispo County, CA/ Municode Library -

[https://library.municode.com/ca/san\\_luis\\_obispo\\_county/codes/county\\_code?nodeId=TIT6BULIRE\\_CH6.32FI](https://library.municode.com/ca/san_luis_obispo_county/codes/county_code?nodeId=TIT6BULIRE_CH6.32FI)