

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



CONTACT: Dennis Mathisen
Information Officer
(916) 651-FIRE (3473)

RELEASE
DATE: June 25, 2014

Public Urged to Use Extreme Caution Due to Drought Conditions

CAL FIRE Offers Fireworks Safety This Fourth of July

Sacramento - Many Californians and visitors will be celebrating our nation's independence this July 4th holiday with fireworks but CAL FIRE urges extreme caution during California's drought emergency. It can take hundreds of thousands of gallons of water to control a large wildfire. Effective July 1, 2014, CAL FIRE Chief Ken Pimlott ordered a ban on open burning throughout the 31 million acres of state responsibility area protected by CAL FIRE due to the elevated threat of wildfire caused by the drought emergency.

"The drought has increased the threat of wildfire in California," said Chief Ken Pimlott, director of CAL FIRE. "We are urging the public to celebrate our nation's independence by attending a professional fireworks display. For those who choose to use fireworks to celebrate, make sure fireworks are allowed in the area of use and follow all safety precautions. You don't want to ruin your celebration by becoming financially responsible for a fire caused by your activities."

California has a zero tolerance for the sale and use of illegal fireworks. Illegal fireworks include sky rockets, bottle rockets, roman candles, aerial shells, firecrackers and other types that explode, go into the air, or move on the ground in an uncontrollable manner. It is illegal to sell, transport, or use fireworks that do not carry the "Safe and Sane" seal, as well as possess or use any fireworks in a community where they are not permitted. If convicted, a violator could be fined up to \$50,000 as well as sent to jail for up to one year. There are nearly 300 communities within California that allow "Safe and Sane" fireworks.

"Every year CAL FIRE and fire departments across California respond to fireworks-related incidents that hurt people and cause damage to property and natural resources," said State Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover, CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal. "If you are going to use fireworks, check with your local fire department first to make sure they are allowed in your area. If they are, use only fireworks that carry the State Fire Marshal's 'Safe and Sane' seal."

CAL FIRE is asking the public to take the following precautions:

- First check that fireworks are allowed in the area of use
- Make sure the firework has the State Fire Marshal "Safe and Sane" seal
- Purchase only from legitimate organizations authorized to sell
- Have a bucket of water, sand or garden hose available at firing site
- Read all instructions before use
- Never alter, modify or enhance fireworks – use only in the manner intended
- Make sure fireworks have proper clearance from flammable materials including dry grass and brush

CAL FIRE has already responded to over 2,500 wildland fires this year, a large increase in the average number of fires for the same time period. Residents are urged to visit www.ReadyforWildfire.org for tips on how to

prepare their homes and family for wildfire. The website also links to important water saving tips, a resource critical to the control of wildfires.

Governor Brown has called on all Californians to reduce their water use by 20 percent and prevent water waste – visit saveourH2O.org to find out how everyone can do their part, visit drought.ca.gov to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.

###