



**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
SUPERVISOR FEDERAL D. GLOVER
DISTRICT FIVE**

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PRESS RELEASE

July Fourth fireworks can be a blast to watch, but ... caution urged

LAST YEAR, a Livermore man died after injuring himself while lighting illegal fireworks during a Livermore block party on the Fourth of July.

The man injured himself after he lit a "mortar-type" explosive that was 3 to 4 inches wide and had been placed in a steel pipe that was welded at an angle on a base, said Livermore police.

Before the man could get out of the way, the device went off in his face. He died that evening. He was 36 years old and a father of three.

As we approach the 4th of July, Supervisor Federal Glover wants to remind East County residents about the danger of fireworks and the use of firearms when celebrating our country's Independence Day.

Contra Costa County is a "fireworks-free-zone"; the sale, possession or use of fireworks of all types and sizes (including Safe & Sane fireworks) are banned in the county (County ordinance 44-2.002). This includes the unincorporated areas as well as the cities.

Deputy Sheriffs on patrol will confiscate all fireworks. Offenders could also face up to \$500 in fines. Possession of dangerous fireworks, like M-80's or cherry bombs, constitute a felony and could result in fines of up to \$5,000 and imprisonment.

The firing of firearms into the air may be common in many countries but that practice is against the law anywhere in Contra Costa County, whether it is in an unincorporated area or a city. Bullets fired into the sky must return to earth and poses a high danger because it can penetrate most roofs and cause damage to property or hit unwary residents.

“Look, its real simple,” says Glover. “Bullets follow the law of physics. What goes up must come down.”

“Fireworks and gun owners shooting up in the air to celebrate are extremely dangerous to our residents and pets,” says Vicki Zumwalt, chair of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council. She notes that there seems to be increase in violators in recent years. The illegal use of fireworks and firearm celebrations, “increase everyone's risk of staying safe in our community.”

There have been instances in other parts of the country where a bullet returning to earth has gone through the roof of a house and almost hit residents.

An additional danger presents itself, especially in East County where it can get breezy during the summer when the cool night air meets the hot land. A change in wind direction, a simple mistake or a faulty product can ignite a deadly fire in seconds. East County, after a wet winter and extra grass and brush, is seeing hot, dry and windy conditions -- the right combination for accidental fires.

"If we're running around putting out little tiny grass fires, it takes us longer to handle the real emergencies," says Randy Champion, fire investigator for the Contra Costa Fire District.

Even with the inherent dangers, Fourth of July fireworks remain a favorite American pastime simply because people remember playing with them as children and see them as patriotic and fun, Champion said.

"Three hundred sixty-five days a year, we tell them not to play with fire, and then on the Fourth of July, we're shooting things in the air, holding sparklers and everything else.”

Fireworks pose a danger and risk to people and property. Statistics show that fireworks injure thousands of people annually. Half of the victims are under 15 years of age.

Instead of setting off fireworks, the supervisor encourages people to enjoy the free July 4th fireworks displays in Pittsburg and Antioch. They are:

- Antioch: After its traditional parade in the afternoon, at dusk people will gather at the riverfront for the city’s annual Independence Day Rivertown celebration.
- Pittsburg: Preceding the evening fireworks around 9 p.m., at the Pittsburg Marina there will be old-fashioned fun and games, hot dogs, sodas and more.

In addition, Brentwood’s Cornfest will have fireworks in the evening of July 7.