

# Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force Report

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March 2026



California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Fire Engineering & Investigations

# Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force Report

## March 2026

The CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal coordinated the development of this report. Before its publication, the Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force developed and recommended the substance of this report for approval by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The General Fireworks Advisory Committee (GFAC) reviewed the report, and GFAC comments are included in Appendix A.



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## Table of Contents

Office of the State Fire Marshal Overview .....	1
History .....	1
OSFM's Fireworks Program .....	1
The Fireworks Industry Within the Regulatory Framework.....	2
Overarching Statutory Authority.....	3
HSC § 12550 .....	3
HSC § 12552 .....	3
Regulatory Background.....	3
Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force.....	4
Task Force Background and Structure.....	4
Task Force Recommendations.....	4
1: State Fireworks Law .....	4
2: State Fireworks Regulations.....	7
3: Fireworks Program Application Process.....	8
4: Fireworks Program Inspections.....	10
5: Training requirements for individuals involved in handling fireworks.....	10
6: Fireworks Enforcement Strategies .....	11
Conclusion.....	14
Appendix A: General Fireworks Advisory Committee (GFAC) Input .....	A1
Overview .....	A1

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## Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force

### **Christine Reed, Task Force Facilitator**

Fire Marshal Central County Fire Department (Retired)  
Fire and Disaster Mitigation Program Manager, International Code Council

### **Matt Alves**

Chief, Lincoln Police Department  
Representing the California Police Chiefs' Association

### **Christopher Bennett**

Arson Investigator, West Covina Fire Department  
Representing California Fire Prevention Officers Association

### **Zach Berg**

Lieutenant, Sutter County Sheriff's  
Representing California State Sheriffs' Association

### **Chris Bachman**

Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal, Contra Costa County FPD  
Representing California Fire Chiefs' Association – Fire Marshal Section

### **James Dobson**

Deputy Chief, San Jose Fire Department  
Representing California Fire Chiefs Association – Operations Section

### **Amy Nygren**

Fire Marshal, Sacramento Metro Fire Department  
Representing the Fire Districts Association of California

### **Ernest Paez**

Fire Marshal, San Manuel Fire Department / Office of the State Fire Marshal (Retired)

### **Patrick Russell**

Chief, Anaheim Fire and Rescue

### **Jay Tracy**

Deputy Fire Marshal, Fresno Fire Department  
Representing the California Conference of Arson Investigators

## Acknowledgments

---

### Fire Engineering and Investigations

**Brice Bennett**

Division Chief, Fire Engineering and Investigations

**Al Adams**

Division Chief, Fire Engineering and Investigations (Retired)

**Bryan Gouge**

Senior Arson and Bomb Investigator

**Caleb Phillips**

Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist) / Fireworks Program Coordinator

**Vijay Mepani**

Deputy State Fire Marshal III (Specialist) / Motion Picture Program Coordinator

**Nick Schroeder**

Arson and Bomb Investigator

**Jamie Sammut**

Attorney

### CAL FIRE

**Joe Tyler**

Director / Fire Chief

**Daniel Berlant**

State Fire Marshal

**Vickie Sakamoto**

Assistant State Fire Marshal

**Frank Bigelow**

Deputy Director

**Andrew Henning**

Assistant Deputy Director

# Office of the State Fire Marshal Overview

## History

The CAL FIRE - Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) supports the mission of CAL FIRE by focusing on fire prevention. The Office of the State Fire Marshal provides this support through a wide variety of fire safety responsibilities including: regulating buildings in which people live, congregate, or are confined; by controlling substances and products which may, in and of themselves, or by their misuse, cause injuries, death and destruction, including by fire; by providing statewide direction for fire prevention within wildland areas; by regulating hazardous liquid pipelines; by developing and reviewing regulations and building standards; and by providing training and education in fire protection methods and responsibilities. These achievements are accomplished through several major program elements, including engineering, education, enforcement, and support from the State Board of Fire Services.

The OSFM's Fire Engineering & Investigations Division (FEI) manages nine statewide programs completing licensing, product evaluation and approval, and enforcement, with a focus on consumer services. Our team requires expertise in fire protection engineering and laboratory testing. One of these nine programs is the Fireworks Program.

California's Fireworks Law, originally passed in 1938, established the OSFM as the only fireworks classification authority in California. Fireworks are classified through laboratory analysis, field examinations, and test firing. As part of the program, the OSFM requires licensing for all pyrotechnic operators, fireworks manufacturers, importers/exporters, wholesalers, retailers, and public display companies. Pyrotechnic operators who discharge fireworks at public displays or launch high-powered and experimental rockets must also pass a written examination and provide proof of experience.

The State's Explosives Law authorizes the California State Fire Marshal to adopt regulations for the safe use, handling, storage, and transportation of explosives. Under those regulations, local law enforcement agencies track the location of storage magazines within their jurisdictions through a permit process. Special exemptions within the regulations allow limited possession and storage of some explosives, such as black powder, used by hunters and the sporting community.

## OSFM's Fireworks Program

The OSFM's Fireworks Program implements the State Fireworks Law by adopting regulations under the authority granted to the OSFM and by enforcing the law and those regulations. Generally, the program's focus is on import, export, wholesale, storage, and use of fireworks within California. As part of regulating these activities, the program currently oversees 32 different licensing types. Those licenses are generally divided into four categories: pyrotechnic

operators, company licenses, device classifications, and retail booths. Pyrotechnic operators are individuals who discharge dangerous fireworks in displays for the public or on film sets. Company licenses are issued to companies for specific actions, such as import, export, wholesale, or public display. Device classifications are used to determine the classification of products for public use. Lastly, retail booths are permitted for the retail sale of Safe and Sane Fireworks. Any device that meets the definition of a firework under Health and Safety Code (HSC) § 12511, with a few exceptions, is regulated by the OSFM's Fireworks Program.

### **The Fireworks Industry Within the Regulatory Framework**

The Fireworks Program oversees several industries involved in the sale and use of fireworks: retail sales, public displays, rocketry, and motion pictures. In each industry, it's generally the same process:

- Fireworks are manufactured by a licensed manufacturer within the State of California, or imported to the State of California by a licensed Importer/Exporter, then sold to a licensed wholesaler, who in the case of Safe and Sane fireworks to either a licensed retail booth for retail sale, or for dangerous fireworks provides them to a licensed public display company who in turn will provide the fireworks to a license pyrotechnic operator, who in conjunction with a permit from the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) will discharge the fireworks in a public display.

One notable exception to this process is that fireworks used on a motion picture set do not require a public display license. In addition to the State requirements for these processes, the fireworks industry is also regulated by the federal government, primarily the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). Although the State and Federal Agencies share some areas of authority, each maintains its own distinct mandate and powers.

The U.S. Department of Transportation organizes explosives into several categories based on the hazards they pose to the public and the risks associated with transportation. Most fireworks are classified as either 1.3G explosives or 1.4G explosives. Fireworks designated 1.3G are always for professional use only. These devices pose a significantly higher risk to the public and are much more tightly regulated by the federal government, including the ATF. 1.3G fireworks are never permitted to be possessed by the general public in California.

Fireworks designated 1.4G are either designated for professional use or consumer use. 1.4G fireworks may or may not be designated as Safe and Sane Fireworks. 1.4G fireworks are usually exempted from most regulations by the ATF. The OSFM regulates both 1.3G and 1.4G fireworks. 1.4G fireworks are legal for the general public only if designated Safe and Sane by the OSFM.

In California, consumer use 1.4G fireworks are further separated into Safe and Sane and Non-Safe and Sane Fireworks. Non-Safe and Sane Fireworks are not permitted for sale or use in California. Consumer use, non-safe-and-sane fireworks are generally legal to purchase and use

in other states. They are legally purchased in out-of-State retail stores and are illegally imported into California for sale or use year-round. These fireworks include skyrockets, bottle rockets, roman candles, aerial shells, firecrackers, and other types that explode, go into the air, or move uncontrollably on the ground.

### **Overarching Statutory Authority**

The HSC authorizes the OSFM to adopt regulations implementing the State Fireworks Law under Division 11 Explosives, Part 2 Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Devices, Chapter 3 Administration:

The following sections are reprinted from the HSC.

#### **HSC § 12550**

The State Fire Marshal shall enforce and administer this part.

#### **HSC § 12552**

The State Fire Marshal shall adopt regulations relating to fireworks as may be necessary for the protection of life and property not inconsistent with the provisions of this part. These regulations shall include, but are not limited to, provisions for the following:

- (a) Granting licenses and permits for the manufacture, wholesale, import, export, and sale of all classes of fireworks.
- (b) Classification of fireworks and pyrotechnic devices.
- (c) Registration of employees of licensees.
- (d) Licenses and permits required for presentation of public displays.
- (e) Granting licenses and permits for research or experimentation with experimental or model rockets and missiles.
- (f) Investigation, examination, and licensing of pyrotechnic operators of all classes.
- (g) Registration of emergency signaling devices and the classification and use of exempt fireworks.
- (h) Transportation of all classifications of fireworks, model rockets, emergency signaling devices, and exempt fireworks.

### **Regulatory Background**

The regulations adopted by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to the authorities in the State Fireworks Law are promulgated in Title 19, California Code of Regulations, Division 1, State Fire Marshal, Chapter 6, Fireworks.

# Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force

## Task Force Background and Structure

On July 1, 2025, a tragic explosion occurred at a fireworks facility in Esparto, CA, tragically killing seven people. This explosion is one of the most significant incidents involving fireworks since the inception of the Fireworks Program. The initial findings from the Esparto incident, coupled with other recent firework-related incidents, prompted the OSFM to assemble and convene the Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force (Task Force). The purpose of the Task Force was to conduct a comprehensive review of current state laws and regulations related to fireworks, propose changes to enhance public safety, and develop a robust Fireworks Program enforcement plan. The Task Force consisted of local public safety professionals from police, sheriff, and fire agencies, representing various organizations and agencies throughout the State. The Task Force met the week of November 3, 2025. The week featured presentations by the OSFM staff on multiple aspects of the Fireworks Program, focusing primarily on licensed fireworks companies and pyrotechnic operators. Throughout the week, the OSFM staff provided presentations on relevant statutes, regulations, inspection practices, enforcement strategies, and law enforcement operations. These presentations were followed by breakout sessions and Task Force discussions, which led to recommendations from the Task Force to the OSFM.

## Task Force Recommendations

The goal of the Task Force was to improve public safety by reducing both the fire and injury incidents related to fireworks. The overall recommendations from the Task Force fall into the following categories:

1. State Fireworks Law
2. State Fireworks Regulations
3. Fireworks Program Application Process
4. Fireworks Program Inspection
5. Training Requirements for Individuals Involved in Handling Fireworks
6. Fireworks Enforcement Strategies

### 1: State Fireworks Law

The Task Force received an overview of the State's Fireworks laws, which grant the OSFM the authority to adopt fireworks regulations and enforce the law.

The recommendations from the Task Force included:

- 1.1. Clarifying The OSFM's Jurisdiction Over Fireworks Imported Via State Ports
- 1.2. Align The Health And Safety Codes' Felony Disqualification With The Department Of Justice
- 1.3. Review The Chain Of Approvals For License Issuance

- 1.4. Move License Scope From Statute To Regulation
- 1.5. Remove The Exception For Paper Caps
- 1.6. Expanding Or Clarifying The Definition Of A Fireworks Kit
- 1.7. Increasing The Suspension Timeframe
- 1.8. Inclusion Of Law Enforcement Agencies In The Inspection Authority
- 1.9. Increase To Allowable Fines For County Ordinances Relating To Fireworks

### **1.1. Clarifying The OSFM's Jurisdiction Over Fireworks Imported Via State Ports**

The Task Force recommends that the OSFM promulgate a regulation adopting a definition of transit pursuant to the authorities in Health and Safety Code (HSC) section 12552 and determine whether changes to the HSC are needed. California has some of the largest ports and serves as one of the primary hubs for importing fireworks. The State Fireworks Law is very broad in definition and scope of importation regulations and requirements. One challenge is when fireworks are brought into ports for transportation to destinations outside California. Under the current regulatory framework, the OSFM receives no notification of these containers. This is exploitable by bad actors, who can claim the destination is outside California and then divert the container within the State. To address this, the Task Force recommends that the OSFM request an Attorney General interpretation of the limits of the OSFM's authority to require out-of-state importers to obtain licenses and to notify the OSFM of importation before import activities. This would impact Health and Safety Code § 12673, 12513, 12509, 12615, and 12675. If the Attorney General provides an opinion that does not give the authority for OSFM to regulate fireworks transiting through the State, the Task Force recommends that the OSFM be designated this authority.

### **1.2. Align The Health And Safety Codes' Felony Disqualification With The Department Of Justice**

To ensure public safety and prevent felons from obtaining fireworks licenses, the Task Force recommends that HSC § 12607 align its licensure disqualifiers with the California Department of Justice's [Firearms Prohibited Categories](#). The Task Force believes that the hazards to the public of dangerous individuals obtaining explosives mirror the dangers of them obtaining firearms.

### **1.3. Review The Chain Of Approvals For License Issuance**

The OSFM is not the sole authority in the fireworks regulatory framework. The ATF serves as the other primary licensing authority, alongside local permits issued by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). The Task Force recommends that the OSFM review its licensing process to ensure that applicants have both an ATF license and a local permit, when required. Under the current statute, HSC § 12640 requires that the OSFM licenses be obtained before an application for a local permit. If the statute is amended, the OSFM could require applicants to obtain the local permit and ATF license before applying for or receiving an OSFM license. Alternatively, OSFM could issue a conditional license that becomes effective only after the local permit is submitted and verified by OSFM.

**1.4. Move License Scope From Statute To Regulation**

Currently, many of the licenses the Fireworks Program issues are set out in the State Fireworks Law. This means that to change the license scope, legislative action is required. The Task Force identified a need for the OSFM to change license scope and definitions. To allow these changes to occur more timely in the future, the Task Force recommends that the licensing scope and definitions be moved from the State Fireworks Law to regulation.

**1.5. Remove The Exception For Paper Caps**

The State Fireworks Law and regulations currently regulate snap caps. However, the State Fireworks Law has an exemption for paper caps containing less than 0.25 grains of pyrotechnic composition. The Task Force identified a challenge in ensuring that devices claiming to meet this exemption actually contain the legal amount or less. Removing this exemption would enable their contents to be controlled while still allowing them to be sold year-round. The exception for paper caps is difficult to confirm without verifying the pyrotechnic composition of the devices; therefore, we recommend deleting the exception for clarity.

**1.6. Expanding Or Clarifying The Definition Of A Fireworks Kit**

HSC § 12512 defines a fireworks kit as any assembly of materials or explosive substances, which is designed and intended by the seller to be assembled by the person receiving such material or explosive substance and when so assembled would come within the definition of fireworks in Section 12511. There are challenges in using this definition in legal proceedings for those who possess precursor chemicals for making fireworks. The Task Force recommends expanding this definition in statute to, at a minimum, include an expanded definition and a list of precursor chemicals.

**1.7. Increasing The Suspension Timeframe**

Currently, HSC § 12591 only allows the OSFM to suspend a license for 30 days while it conducts an investigation. Most investigations, especially complex ones like in Esparto, can take much longer than 30 days. The Task Force provided a recommendation that the statutory timeframe for suspensions be increased from 30 days to 90 days. This extension will allow the OSFM program staff to conduct a thorough investigation and prevent those licensees under investigation from operating.

**1.8. Inclusion Of Law Enforcement Agencies In The Inspection Authority**

California Health and Safety Code § 12721 provides a list of agencies with explicit authority to seize fireworks. HSC § 12558 provides authority to conduct inspections and points to the listed authorities identified in HSC § 12721. The Task Force identified that local law enforcement agencies were not included in the list. The Task Force recommends that the law be updated to include local law enforcement's ability to assist, but not to be included in the right of entry in this statute.

**1.9 Increase To Allowable Fines For County Ordinances Relating To Fireworks**

The Task Force identified a limitation with county ordinances. Many Fire Jurisdictions throughout the State rely on county ordinances to enforce their regulations. California

Government Code § 25132 places a limit on the fine imposed for violations. Typically, those fines are either \$100 or \$130, depending on the basis for the violation. AHJs that rely on county ordinances would either be limited to this fine amount or would be required to approach each city served by that AHJ and support an ordinance that is not subject to this limit. This would also prevent these higher fines from being imposed in unincorporated county areas. The Task Force recommends increasing the limit in this statute specifically for fireworks to allow county jurisdictions flexibility in issuing administrative citations and to allow for more punitive fines, in line with other cities' ordinances and state fines for dangerous fireworks. This amendment should include a longer time frame than the existing one-year limitation, given that the majority of fireworks violations happen during the Fourth of July period.

## 2. State Fireworks Regulations

The OSFM staff presented on the existing regulations in Title 19, California Code of Regulations, Division 1, Chapter 6. The Task Force provided recommendations on proposed amendments to those regulations as follows:

- 2.1. Improve The Usability Of The *Safe And Sane Book*
- 2.2. Safe And Sane Product Retesting
- 2.3. Fireworks Identification
- 2.4. Including A Marking Provision For Overpacking Fireworks
- 2.5. Require Import Notification
- 2.6. Requiring Storage Facilities To Maintain Logs
- 2.7. Improve The OSFM's Testing Abilities

### 2.1. Improve The Usability Of The *Safe And Sane Book*.

The Task Force identified the challenges of identifying approved Safe and Sane products in the field. Currently, the only way to identify approved products is to observe the seal on the product and look up the name in the OSFM's published *Safe and Sane Book*. However, the *Safe and Sane Book* only publishes the product name and the importer who tested it. The Task Force recommends several improvements to this process, including the use of a unique identifier for each product that can be matched in the *Safe and Sane Book*, and improving the *Safe and Sane Book* to include more information, including but not limited to, photos of each device. These changes would improve information sharing and enforceability with partner agencies.

### 2.2. Safe And Sane Product Retesting

Approved Safe and Sane products are tested only once for a lifetime approval, and the OSFM has no authority to conduct additional tests as needed. The Task Force recommends implementing periodic retests to confirm that products are continually manufactured to the same specifications as when initially tested. Additionally, the Task Force recommends that OSFM be granted the authority to conduct sampling and targeted retests, either randomly or upon receipt of information that the OSFM believes requires a retest.

**2.3. Firework Identifications**

The Task Force identified the difficulty in identifying dangerous fireworks from other fireworks. The Task Force recommends that the OSFM adopt regulations that specify more robust marking and labeling requirements for fireworks. This will lead to greater clarity and enforcement of the State Fireworks Law and the regulations adopted pursuant to it.

**2.4. Including A Marking Provision For Overpacking Fireworks**

Bulk illegal fireworks are often on pallets, with the explosives placard obscured by black plastic wrap, to obfuscate the actual items being shipped. While this is already a violation of DOT regulations, the Task Force recommends that the OSFM address the matter by requiring that all fireworks packages be clearly labeled and that any labeling or placarding on the exterior of the boxes be visible when overwrap is used. This regulation would give the OSFM direct regulatory authority over fireworks packaging.

**2.5. Require Import Notification**

Existing import notifications do not specify the destination of the fireworks. The Task Force recommends expanding import notification specifications to include the shipment's destination. This would help ensure that fireworks were being stored correctly in locations with required permits.

**2.6. Requiring Storage Facilities To Maintain Logs**

Existing ATF regulations require that storage facilities for 1.3G fireworks maintain logs showing the disposition of fireworks. The OSFM has no such requirement for the storage and disposition of 1.3G or 1.4G fireworks. The Task Force recommends that the OSFM adopt a requirement to maintain records on the storage and disposition of all fireworks. This will help ensure fireworks are transported, stored, and sold in compliance with the State Fireworks Law and the regulations adopted pursuant to it.

**2.7. Improve The OSFM's Testing Abilities**

The OSFM previously could conduct in-house laboratory tests on fireworks. The OSFM enforcement officials spoke on the need for testing capacity for enforcement. The Task Force recommends that the OSFM consider the need for fireworks lab testing and either reinstate an in-house laboratory or contract with a 3rd party for testing. This would assist with investigations, seizures, and licensing actions.

**3. Fireworks Program Application Process**

The Task Force received an overview of the Fireworks Program license application process and provided input. The recommendations from the Task Force include:

- 3.1. Collect Storage Locations Of Fireworks
- 3.2. Mirror The ATF Requirements For Applications
- 3.3. Require AHJ Input On Prospective Applications
- 3.4. Require A Background Check For Company License Applications
- 3.5. Require Explosive Operational Permits At Renewal

### **3.1. Collect Storage Locations Of Fireworks**

The Task Force found that companies are not currently required to list all their fireworks storage locations when applying for a license. Adding this requirement would give the OSFM a complete inventory of where fireworks are stored across California. This would help the OSFM track storage sites, conduct safety inspections, and share accurate information with local fire and safety officials. The recommendation also requires the contact information for each storage site be included. This ensures the OSFM can quickly contact the proper person at every storage site if questions or safety concerns arise.

### **3.2. Mirror The ATF Requirements For Applications**

The Task Force recommends that the OSFM consider aligning parts of its licensing process with federal requirements used by the ATF. This alignment would help close gaps between state and federal laws and regulations and ensure stronger oversight in situations where a state license is required but a federal one is not.

One key recommendation is to require a site plan for every fireworks storage location as part of each license application. This would give the State a clearer understanding of where fireworks are stored and how those sites are organized. The Task Force also recommends adopting a process similar to ATF's for updating company ownership or officer information on licenses. This would help verify who is responsible for each licensed operation. In addition, the Task Force recommends verifying employees in a way that mirrors the ATF's employee-possessor process, ensuring that individuals working with fireworks meet appropriate safety and background standards. This would ensure public safety and consistency across both state and federal levels of fireworks regulations.

### **3.3. Require AHJ Input On Prospective Applications**

In accordance with existing statute, the OSFM's fireworks license must be issued before any application for a permit to the AHJ. The Task Force recommends a method that requires AHJ input before issuance of the final OSFM fireworks license. This will allow AHJs to be aware of fireworks activities before the issuance of the OSFM fireworks license and increase clarity for the regulated community that the state fireworks license is only one of the necessary regulatory documents to be obtained before commencing operations.

### **3.4. Require A Background Check For Company License Applications**

The Task Force found that the current fireworks licensing program does not require background checks for individuals who act as company officers or owners of fireworks businesses, or for individuals who apply for licenses. The Task Force recommends adding these applicants to the background check process conducted by the OSFM. This change would prevent individuals with felony convictions from serving as officers or owners of licensed fireworks companies, ensuring stronger oversight and greater accountability within the industry.

### **3.5. Require Explosive Operational Permits At Renewal**

The Task Force recommends that the OSFM require companies to provide a current Operational Permit from the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) as required by HSC 12640 when renewing their state fireworks license. This permit is issued by the local AHJ, such as a city or county fire department. Requiring this documentation at renewal would ensure that local officials are fully aware of every site where fireworks are being stored within their community. It also strengthens coordination between the state and local agencies, helps identify any unreported or outdated storage locations, and supports more effective oversight and safety inspections.

## **4. Fireworks Program Inspections**

The Task Force received an overview of the Fireworks Program's inspection authority and available enforcement actions. Suggestions from the Task Force include:

- 4.1. Conducting Joint Inspections With Allied Agencies
- 4.2. Reimplementation Of Port Authorizations For The OSFM
- 4.3. Administrative Citation Program

### **4.1. Conducting Joint Inspections With Allied Agencies**

The Fireworks Program inspection process was an area where the Task Force identified an opportunity for OSFM to work more closely with allied agencies. The Task Force recommends conducting inspections with the ATF, AHJs, and other agencies at least once a year at all storage locations. As part of this recommendation, the Task Force identified the creation of a mandate for inspection as part of the permitting and license process.

### **4.2. Reimplementation Of Port Authorizations For The OSFM**

Previously, the OSFM would be contacted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection to approve the release of containers of fireworks from the port. This program was terminated in the early 2000s due to staffing. The Task Force recommends reimplementation of a similar program that would also notify AHJs of fireworks containers arriving in their jurisdictions.

### **4.3. Administrative Citation Program**

The Task Force identified a need for the OSFM to develop an administrative citation program. This will provide the OSFM with greater flexibility to conduct enforcement operations. OSFM currently has the authority to revoke licenses or, instead of revocation, under the authority granted by HSC § 12606.1, assess financial penalties on licensees. However, this process requires a hearing before an administrative law judge in accordance with California Government Code § 11500, et seq. before revocation and is only available against licensees. The Task Force recommends that OSFM develop an administrative citation program. This program would allow citations to be issued to non-licensees and provide flexibility in enforcement against licensees.

## **5. Training requirements for individuals involved in handling fireworks**

The OSFM gave an overview of required and available training. The Task Force identified improvements to the training requirements for individuals who handle fireworks. Areas for improvement identified by the Task Force were to:

- 5.1. Create Training Requirements For Employees And Contractors Of Licensed Fireworks Companies
- 5.2. Improve The OSFM Course Delivery To AHJs
- 5.3. Creation Of A Webinar for AHJs

### **5.1. Create Training Requirements For Employees And Contractors Of Licensed Fireworks Companies**

The Task Force identified a need for improved training requirements for non-pyrotechnic operator employees and contractors of licensed fireworks companies. The goal is to improve safety for people handling fireworks. The OSFM staff could inspect these training requirements to confirm compliance. There are currently no qualifications required, including training, for personnel who handle fireworks that are exposed to the hazards of working with explosives, and who may not fully understand those hazards.

### **5.2. Improving The OSFM Course Delivery To AHJs**

Another item identified by the Task Force was to increase the delivery of the OSFM fireworks training opportunities to AHJs. Improved training for AHJs would enhance local jurisdictions' ability to understand and enforce laws and regulations governing fireworks programs. Currently, FEI offers three classes through the OSFM's State Fire Training Division: Outdoor Aerial Public Display Fireworks, Proximate Audience Pyrotechnics, and Motion Picture Television – Fire Safety Officer. These classes are limited in their offerings, and the Task Force expressed interest in more frequent offerings, as well as in these and newly adopted courses.

### **5.3. Creation Of A Webinar For AHJs**

One method to expand the OSFM fireworks program's training opportunities, as suggested by the Task Force, was to create webinars or online training for public safety agencies on the safe handling of seized fireworks to enhance their knowledge and safety. The OSFM currently does this annually at the end of June. A webinar would allow a broader audience to access and utilize the training.

## **6. Fireworks Enforcement Strategies**

The OSFM staff presented the challenges for fireworks enforcement staff. After a discussion of the specifics, the Task Force recommends the following:

- 6.1. Workforce Analysis
- 6.2. Disposal Funding Solutions
- 6.3. Implementation Of A Processing Facility
- 6.4. Creation of an Enforcement Task Force
- 6.5. Meeting With District Attorneys
- 6.6. Increasing Penalties For Sales Of Illegal Fireworks
- 6.7. Collaboration With DMV For Suspension Of Commercial Driver Licenses
- 6.8. OSFM Bomb Squad Certification
- 6.9. Improve Public Outreach
- 6.10. Increasing Penalties For Use Of Illegal Fireworks

### **6.1. Workforce Analysis**

The Task Force recommends that the OSFM conduct a workforce analysis to determine the number of enforcement personnel needed to improve the OSFM's enforcement, training, and disposal capabilities.

### **6.2. Disposal Funding Solutions**

The Task Force recognizes that the cost of disposing of seized fireworks has continued to rise. This creates significant challenges for OSFM and local agencies responsible for enforcement and disposal. To address this issue, the Task Force recommends establishing a stable funding source based on the average annual cost of disposal. In addition, the Task Force discussed options to help offset expenses, including creating a buy-back program that allows the State to resell seized fireworks that are safe and legally permissible, thereby reducing waste and generating revenue. Another option discussed was to implement a civil cost recovery program requiring individuals from whom fireworks are seized to pay for disposal costs. This approach would enable OSFM to recover expenses directly, reinforce accountability, and reduce the financial burden on state and local agencies.

### **6.3. Implementation of a Processing Facility**

The Task Force recommends that the OSFM seek a facility to process, store, and ship fireworks. Existing OSFM facilities utilized for this are not centrally located and are in outdoor areas that are not ideal for processing. The Task Force recommends that OSFM seek or build centrally located facilities in the northern and southern parts of California that are protected from the elements and provide a safe place to receive, process, store, and ship fireworks.

### **6.4. Creation of an Enforcement Task Force**

The Task Force recognizes a need for a task force funded by the OSFM to combat the sale and use of illegal fireworks throughout California. The Task Force would operate similarly to other law enforcement task forces, with task force officers from departments across the State. Some positions would be funded, and others would be voluntary assignments funded by the agency. This task force would prompt inter-agency information sharing and streamline enforcement.

### **6.5. Meeting with District Attorneys**

The Task Force recommends that the OSFM work more closely with District Attorney offices and associations to strengthen enforcement of California's fireworks laws and regulations. This would include meetings to explain the penalties under state law and to ensure they understand the risks associated with illegal fireworks activity. By improving communication and providing this education, the OSFM can help encourage prosecutors to pursue charges when violations occur. This collaboration would support more consistent enforcement across the State, deter illegal activity, and reinforce the importance of holding violators accountable for actions that put communities at risk.

### **6.6. Increasing Penalties for Sales of Illegal Fireworks**

The Task Force identified an increase in the sale of illegal fireworks and suggested increasing penalties for their sale, above and beyond those for simple possession. The Task Force

recommends upgrading these crimes to a felony. This would allow the OSFM and prosecutors to secure more serious charges against those who possess dangerous fireworks with the intent of selling them.

### **6.7. Collaboration with DMV for Suspension of Commercial Driver Licenses**

The Task Force suggests meeting with the Department of Motor Vehicles to utilize an existing statute, HSC 12703, that allows suspension of a commercial driver's license when the driver is transporting dangerous fireworks without proper licensure or authorization. The Task Force recommends that the OSFM meet with DMV to discuss the possibility and to establish a process.

### **6.8. OSFM Bomb Squad Certification**

The Arson and Bomb Unit of the OSFM was previously an accredited bomb squad; that accreditation lapsed in the 2000s due to staffing constraints. In the years since, the OSFM has restaffed the Arson and Bomb Unit and has been working to reobtain the accreditation. The Task Force recommends that the Arson and Bomb unit continue working to obtain the certification.

### **6.9. Improve Public Outreach**

The Task Force suggests that the OSFM improve its public outreach to reduce demand for illegal fireworks. This outreach education could include purchasing illegal fireworks, storage of fireworks, and developing a social media toolbox for local agencies that covers the impacts on children, animals, veterans, fire agencies, and other injuries that can occur.

### **6.10 Increasing Penalties for Use of Illegal Fireworks**

Existing state law does not provide a sufficient deterrent to the use of illegal fireworks. The Task Force recommends increasing penalties for the use and possession of illegal fireworks. These penalties could scale for repeat offenders over a given time frame. Increased penalties should serve as a deterrent to reduce demand for black market fireworks.

# Conclusion

The Public Safety Fireworks Enforcement Task Force was convened to conduct a comprehensive review of current state laws and regulations related to fireworks, propose regulatory and programmatic changes to enhance public safety, and develop a robust enforcement plan.

The recommendations in this report reflect the combined expertise of California's fire service and law enforcement professionals. They outline a clear path to modernize oversight, close regulatory gaps, and strengthen coordination among state, local, and federal partners. The recommendations will require changes to laws and regulations, as well as increased funding and staffing for the Office of the State Fire Marshal to implement them.

Key priorities include clarifying and refining statutory provisions to improve enforceability, improving licensing and application processes, expanding inspection and enforcement tools, enhancing training for those who handle fireworks, and ensuring adequate resources for the safe disposal of seized fireworks. These proposals offer both immediate improvements and long-term strategies to create a more resilient and accountable regulatory system.

The Task Force emphasizes that effective fireworks safety depends on a coordinated, multi-agency approach. Collaboration among regulators, local fire and law enforcement agencies, licensed fireworks companies, and communities is essential. By implementing these recommendations, California can reduce the risks associated with fireworks, protect first responders and the public, and prevent future tragedies.

OSFM extends its gratitude to the Task Force members for their commitment and expertise, and looks forward to working with policymakers, local partners, and industry stakeholders to implement these recommendations and strengthen public safety statewide.

## Appendix A: General Fireworks Advisory Committee (GFAC) Input

### Overview

The General Fireworks Advisory Committee (GFAC) serves as a communication channel between the Office of the State Fire Marshal, industry representatives, the public, and the fire service. Its purpose is to gather comments and specific perspectives on proposed regulations and technical issues related to fireworks.

GFAC was presented with the Task Force's draft report during its January 2026 meeting. Preliminary comments were provided by GFAC members to the Task Force before completion of this report.

At its April 2026 meeting, GFAC will provide input based on the Task Force's recommendations. Appendix A will reflect GFAC's feedback and perspectives on the Task Force's recommendations, providing additional insights to inform the final report. The OSFM will add the content to Appendix A after the April 2026 meeting and publish a revised report.