

Memorandum
City of Lawrence
Police Department

To: Diane Stoddard, Interim City Manager
From: Captain Paul Fellers, Acting Chief of Police
Cc: Casey Toomay, Assistant City Manager
Date: July 7, 2015
Re: Fireworks Call Response

Background

On November 19, 2002, the City of Lawrence adopted Ordinance No. 7594 which amended the Uniform Fire Code as to the regulation of fireworks. This prohibited the “use, possession, handling and sale of fireworks” within the City of Lawrence. There were several exceptions which included official public displays as well as novelty type items as defined by the United States Department of Transportation.

Discussion

Response to a single firework nuisance call is fairly simple if an officer is able to identify the offender – fireworks are disposable, moving devices designed for single use which makes it easier to avoid detection than, for instance, a house party or stereo noise complaint. This is compounded when the complaint can be held. When an offender is identified, options include a warning, a warning with a confiscation of items, or a citation with a confiscation of items. The time needed for identification of persons, confiscation of the items, and documentation/destruction (at a designated location as the fireworks cannot be safely stored in evidence) of the items requires at least 30 minutes for each instance. This becomes an issue when there are multiple calls for service holding which is typically seen during the time period around the July 4th Holiday and especially on the day itself. These calls include fights, domestic disturbances, alcohol offenses, and other volatile situations associated with individuals in a celebratory mood. The Lawrence Police Department does additionally staff during this time period; however, these resources are usually absorbed into the handling of the increased “regular” call load. The Department has also traditionally provided staffing to be present during the public displays and crowds gathered in the downtown/river levee area.

Police response has included complaint based attention and self-initiated response when time allows. Officers are instructed to handle violations in an efficient manner that would stop the violation yet would not result in calls going unanswered. This involves

discretion on the part of the officer with regard to the handling of fireworks calls. Officers are to manage the call load in order to ensure there is an available officer to handle incoming calls. Officers are not encouraged to engage in protracted actions which will remove themselves from service, or even tie up additional officers, for lengthy periods of time. Voluntary compliance coupled with education is utilized prior to expending time processing an arrest through the issuance of a Notice To Appear (NTA).

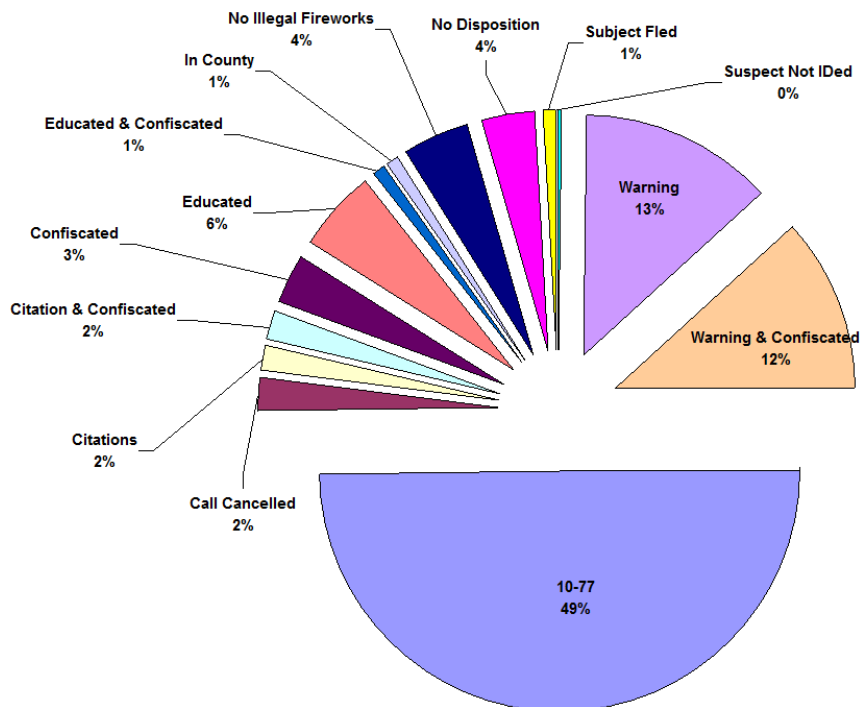
DATA

In the table below are listed the fireworks related calls for the past eight years. This only captures the time period around (June 30 – July 6) July 4th (when most of the calls are generated), as well as other calls that are believed to be fireworks related.

	CALLS FOR SERVICE							
	Fireworks	Criminal Damage	Investigate Vehicle	Request to Speak	Sound of Gunshots	Sound of Explosion	Citations	Confiscated
2008	206	0	0	0	4	2	4	24
2009	212	0	0	0	0	0	2	10
2010	193	0	0	0	2	0	4	12
2011	216	0	0	0	4	0	1	8
2012	206	0	0	0	2	3	1	7
2013	189	0	0	0	1	0	4	12
2014	226	0	0	0	0	0	34	15
2015	261	1	1	1	0	0	10	45
Average	214	0	0	0	2	1	8	17

A hand search was conducted of the 2015 calls to determine call disposition; and this is likely representative of other years. An overall breakdown is presented in the below chart.

2015 Firework Call Dispositions



A large percentage (49%) of the calls are classified as "10-77". This indicates that the officer was not able to confirm the fireworks call. This would usually be the result of the officer being dispatched to the area after the call had been holding for some time and the reported activity was no longer taking place. The calls that do not have a disposition (4%) can be a combination of no contact, not being able to confirm the complaint, or the officers simply handling the call without taking the radio air time to advise dispatch how the call was handled.