



# ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY

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Chip Prather, Fire Chief

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July 23, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Wieben Stock  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, California 92701

**RE: Response to Grand Jury Report: "The Anatomy of Safe and Sane Fireworks Sales in Orange County"**

Dear Judge Wieben Stock:

This letter is submitted in response to Findings F-10 through F-13 of the April 16, 2008 Grand Jury report, "The Anatomy of Safe and Sane Fireworks Sales in Orange County." The Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) appreciates the opportunity to provide the Grand Jury with responses to the four findings specified for fire service response.

Finding F-10 - "The use of illegal fireworks is significantly greater in cities that allow the sale of legal fireworks."

The OCFA agrees with this finding. Two of the twenty-two cities served by the OCFA allow the use of legal fireworks, Buena Park and Stanton. Patrols by firefighters, investigators, and fire inspectors on July 4<sup>th</sup> of each year consistently yield higher observations and confiscations of illegal fireworks in both cities than in the other 20 or in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Finding F-11 - "The use of legal fireworks can mask the use of illegal fireworks."

The OCFA agrees with this finding. Based on the observations noted above, OCFA staff believes this to be the case.

Finding F-12 - "Safety officials are of the opinion that legal fireworks sales should be banned in the interest of public safety."

The OCFA partially disagrees with this finding. OCFA staff cannot speak for all safety officials but we have long been opponents of the sale and use of any fireworks, including legal fireworks, and have sought bans against them and restrictions to their use at both the State and local level. Opposition is based on the facts that legal fireworks have been the cause of fires and injuries and it is our mission to mitigate both in order to preserve and improve the level of safety in the communities we serve.

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We also recognize that our role is to provide factual data to the policy makers so that they may make informed decisions regarding the use of fireworks within the borders of their cities.

Finding F-13 – “Safety officials can significantly curb the use of illegal fireworks in these cities within three years if the sale of legal fireworks were banned.”

The OCFA partially disagrees with this finding. The effectiveness of programs to curb or stop the unlawful sale and use of illegal fireworks in the cities we serve may well be improved if all fireworks were banned. However, it is difficult to predict the significance or timeframe for the improvement.

The OCFA is currently completing our After Action report for July 4, 2008 and will forward copies to the Grand Jury upon completion. If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Laura Blaul at (714) 573 – 6018 or [laurablaul@ocfa.org](mailto:laurablaul@ocfa.org).

Sincerely,



Chip Prather  
Fire Chief

pc: Craig Scott, Chairman, OCFA Board of Directors  
Jake Wager, City Manager, City of Stanton  
Rick Warsinski, City Manager, City of Buena Park  
Patrick McIntosh, Deputy Chief  
Laura Blaul, Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal