



Corporate Report

NO.: R264

COUNCIL DATE: November 28, 2005

REGULAR

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: 23 November 2005
FROM: **Fire Chief / Chief Superintendent RCMP** FILE: 3900-20
SUBJECT: **Fireworks**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council Receive this report.

On the 30th day of May, 2005, Surrey By-law No. 4200 (Fireworks By-law) was reconsidered and finally adopted by City Council.

The impact of the by-law changes is clearly illustrated by the comparison of the 2004 fireworks incident numbers and the dollar loss total, with the 2005 totals:

SURREY FIRE SERVICE

- 2004, 90 calls relating to fireworks
- 2005, 18 calls relating to fireworks, equalling an **80% reduction**

- 2004 dollar loss, \$54,020
- 2005 dollar loss, \$14,950, equalling a **73% reduction**

SURREY RCMP

- 2004, 220 calls relating to fireworks
- 2005, 188 calls relating to fireworks. equalling a **15% reduction**

As a result of the new restrictions and requirements contained in the by-law pertaining to the sale and use of consumer fireworks, both the Surrey RCMP and the Surrey Fire Service experienced a significant reduction in calls for service for fireworks related incidents compared to the same times last year.

In 2004, 60 permits were issued for fireworks vendors to sell fireworks in Surrey and as a result fireworks were easily available and highly advertised from many high-traffic and prominent street locations.

In 2005, no vendor permits were even applied for as all of last year's vendors were contacted in advance and made aware of the new restrictions.

By having eliminated the supply, the numbers of indiscriminate and untrained users of family fireworks were drastically reduced in spite of their availability in other jurisdictions. The "out-of-site, out-of-mind" theory proved effective in most cases.

The result of the significant drop in fireworks incidents translated into a much safer and quieter Halloween for most Surrey residents. Not only were the actual events and probabilities of fires and injuries from fireworks in Surrey substantially reduced, but so was the impact and overtaxing of our emergency services on what had become the undisputed busiest night of the year.

Although a small number of reports alleging ineffectiveness of the new by-law restrictions have appeared in local media, the City of Surrey is seen as a leader in public safety by organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association and BC Children's Hospital with respect to how consumer or family fireworks are now controlled.

Fireworks are still permitted for use in Surrey at any time of the year provided the person in charge of the display has a valid Fireworks Supervisors certificate and a permit from the Surrey Fire Service. Two such private displays have occurred recently that did not generate one incident or complaint.

Support for a more global ban on consumer fireworks continues to grow and will always be challenged by select groups of fireworks users, suppliers and manufacturers. Those most often called on to deal with the unnecessary preventable fires and the unfortunate pain and suffering caused from burn injuries have openly and officially endorsed a ban on consumer fireworks. The organizations representing health care and fire service workers listed below would each support the strong leadership shown by the City of Surrey where public safety is the prominent issue.

- American Academy of Ophthalmology
- American Academy of Paediatrics
- American Association for Hand Surgery
- American Burn Association
- American College of Emergency Physicians
- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- International Association of Firefighters
- International Fire Marshals Association
- National Association of State Fire Marshals
- Fire Prevention Officers Association of BC
- Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs
- BC Children's Hospital

Fraser MacRae
Chief Superintendent RCMP

Len Garis
FireChief