



Arizona Fire Marshals Association

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February 2, 2021

Arizona State Senate
Capitol Complex
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2890

RE: SB 1334 fireworks; aerial devices: AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 36-1601 AND 36-1605, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; RELATING TO FIREWORKS.

Honorable Senate Members:

As President of the Arizona Fire Marshals Association, I am writing to urge you to oppose SB 1334 which would expand the types of permissible consumer fireworks, to include multiple tube aerial devices. As written, this bill would increase the potential for injury to the public with the addition of aerial type devices. National organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the National Safety Council (NSC) oppose the use of fireworks at any level, by the general public due to injuries. This bill, as written, would add a type of firework, specifically an aerial type that not only increases the risk of injury but the risk of fire to our precious wild lands, structures, and property as well.

Since 1982, the Arizona Fire Marshals Association has been committed to the protection of life and property through education, fire code development and administration for the approximately 200 fire districts and fire departments in the state, as well as the communities they serve. Our membership is represented by fire code professionals from all 15 Arizona counties.

Despite great efforts by fire and life safety code development and education professionals nationally, there has not been a reduction in the number of fireworks injuries over the past several years. According to the 2018 Fireworks Annual Report, published in June 2019 by Yongline Tu and Jason Ng for the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the number of people injured by fireworks was estimated at 9,100. Sixty-two percent of these injuries occurred between June 22 and July 22 of 2018. An estimated 19,500 fires were started by fireworks in 2018, resulting in \$105 million in direct property damage and five civilian deaths that occurred in the 1,755 structure fires. These structure fires accounted for 45% of the property damage loss.

In 2020, the restrictions for public assembly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of many special events, including professional fireworks shows. I am witness to the fact that many individuals chose to have their own private fireworks celebrations, which included aerial fireworks not currently legal but may be allowed should this Bill pass. According to media reports and police records, it would appear that many state residents have found themselves next door to such events, maybe even cleaning aerial fireworks off of their roofs and out of their own backyard pools every weekend. A January 5, 2021 interview with Phoenix Councilmember Debra Stark revealed an increase in illegal, including aerial, fireworks use that has resulted in a petition to ban consumer fireworks all together (www.change.org).

Law enforcement officers know that aerial fireworks are illegal, and if they are fortunate to arrive at a location where they are being used, they have greater ability to proceed with enforcement action. However, the proposed bill would limit what little enforcement ability these resource strapped agencies have. Legalizing any aerial fireworks would make it extremely difficult for officers to determine legality. It may even change dispatch protocols as dispatchers ask if the fireworks are aerial or not when a complaint call is made to determine if sending an officer is a priority.

The passing of SB1334 will undoubtedly result in an increase in fireworks related, burns, injuries, fires and death. It will further limit the ability for law enforcement to stop the use of illegal fireworks. It will reduce the safety of neighborhoods, both rural and urban and increase the threat to our wild land areas. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request to oppose SB 1334. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Barbara Rice

Barbara Rice
President AZFMA
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