

Fresno Fire responds to more than 200 calls from fires that were caused by fireworks

By Anthony Galaviz

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The Fresno Fire Department responded to more than 200 calls for fires triggered by fireworks on the Fourth of July, and air quality took a nose dive Saturday night.

The pace of fire calls got so bad that the department temporarily stopped responding to medical aid emergencies except cardiac arrest.

“We knew we were going to get busy,” department spokesman Shane Brown said. “It started right at dusk and calls were starting to pour in.”

Brown said FFD had 10 extra firefighters on staff to deal with heavy call volume.

Early Sunday morning, Fresno Fire was still working on 14 fires throughout the city and “our resources have been completely stretched to the max,” Brown said.

‘Worst fireworks night’ ever

Fresno City Councilmember Luis Chavez said it “was the worst fireworks night he’s ever seen.”

Chavez took a video of a transformer on fire as a result of fireworks.

Fresno Fire received 211 calls Saturday night related to fireworks, according to the department. Those fires consisted of grass and structure fires.

Around 11 a.m. at Dudley and Arthur avenues in central Fresno, a detached garage was destroyed and two homes suffered damage that was suspected to be caused by fireworks, Brown said.

At 1:15 a.m., Fresno Fire put out a two-alarm house fire in southeast Fresno.

There were no reported injuries throughout the fire incidents in Fresno.

“We had several reports of multiple structure fires of people trapped inside,” Brown said. “By the time our units were on the scene, the residents had escaped on their own.”

There were similar reports around the state.

San Francisco saw at least 100 fires between 3 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., according to the San Francisco Chronicle. In Contra Costa County, firefighters responded to 50 fires between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Los Angeles firefighters answered more than 3,000 service calls, according to the L.A. Times.

Calls to Orange County firefighters jumped 58% on July 4th, the Register reported, with crews there putting out 100-plus fires.

Unhealthy air

There was a corresponding spike in unhealthy air quality. PM2.5, the official federal measurement of pollution, hit 150 micrograms per cubic meter at 10 p.m. in downtown Fresno, up from 10 an hour earlier.

A PM2.5 reading of 75 is Level 5 – everyone should avoid outdoor activity.