



Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SAN DIEGO WATER BOARD PRESCRIBES REQUIREMENTS TO PROTECT COASTAL AND INLAND WATERS FROM POLLUTANTS DISCHARGED AT FIREWORK EVENTS
Effective 6/1/11 - Rules Allow Fireworks Displays to Continue While Protecting Water

SAN DIEGO - The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region (San Diego Water Board) issued a general National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for residual firework pollutant waste discharges to coastal and inland surface waters in the San Diego Region from the public display of fireworks. The rules affect firework displays over any water body within the boundaries of the San Diego Region, including all ocean waters, bays, estuaries, rivers, streams, reservoirs, and lakes.

The new requirements balance the importance of public displays of fireworks as part of our national and community celebrations and the need to prevent degradation of water and sediment quality from the fallout of firework combustion residue, said David Gibson, the San Diego Water Board's Executive Officer. The objective of the NPDES Permit is to protect public health, freshwater aquatic life, and marine life by prescribing reasonable management measures to prevent and reduce pollution that results from firework displays.

Public drinking and recreational waters can be polluted by fireworks discharges. Some of the more common chemical pollutants used in fireworks to produce visual color or explosive effects at typical community display events include aluminum, antimony, barium, carbon, calcium, chlorine, cesium, copper, iron, potassium, lithium, magnesium, nitrates, chlorates and perchlorates, phosphorus, sodium, sulfur, strontium, titanium, and zinc. One of the main pollutants of concern, perchlorate, is known to contaminate drinking water supplies if significant amounts accumulate in waterways. Over time, the cumulative loading of pollutants from firework events can cause toxicity to bottom-dwelling aquatic organisms in the receiving water sediments.

The San Diego Water Board's adoption of the NPDES Permit will enable firework event promoters to apply for coverage under the Permit so that they can lawfully discharge pollutants to surface waters from firework events in accordance with the terms of federal and state water pollution laws.

The management measures specified in the NPDES Permit are consistent with existing regulations, requiring to the extent practical, the collection, removal, and management of firework debris found during inspection of the affected receiving waters. The NPDES Permit holds firework event promoters accountable by requiring submittal of a post-event report certifying that the management measures were implemented throughout the firework event.

Failure to comply with provisions or requirements of the NPDES Permit may subject firework event promoters to administrative or civil liabilities, criminal penalties, and/or other enforcement remedies to ensure compliance. Additionally, certain violations may result in civil or criminal enforcement by local, state, or federal law enforcement entities.



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The NPDES Permit becomes effective on June 1, 2011. Details of the NPDES Permit can be found at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/npdes/fireworks/fireworks.shtml