



NEWS RELEASE
City of Chico
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*****MEDIA ALERT*****

ILLEGAL FIRE RESPONSE IN CITY PARKS, GREENBELTS, AND WATERWAYS

(Chico, CA – February 12, 2021–) The Chico Police and Fire Departments regularly field requests from the community regarding each department’s role in mitigating illegal fires within the City’s parks, greenways, and waterways. The Departments mutually respond to all reported illegal fires in these public spaces. The Chico Police Department considers illegal fires a threat to public safety and takes these calls for service seriously. However, like all calls for service within the City, and given limited resources at any particular time, they must prioritize which calls receive first response.

While the Chico Police Department is ultimately responsible for the enforcement of City, State and Federal applicable laws, it is not always possible to make arrests or issue a citation related to illegal fires in public spaces due to the difficulty in identifying the responsible party or parties. Specifically, Chico Police officers routinely encounter situations where multiple potential suspects are identified who may be responsible for the illegal fire. As such, Chico Police officers have the legal burden of establishing probable cause as to who started the fire in order to make a physical arrest or cite the responsible person.

The Chico Fire Department, by contrast, is responsible for assessing the risks associated with a fire and extinguishing or requesting the responsible party extinguish an illegal fire.

The Chico Police and Fire Departments are committed to employing practical and legal methods for reducing these risks to ensure the safety of our community.

For media inquiries, please contact Michelle Walker, Chico Police Department Public Information Officer, at (530) 897-5812; Chico Fire Department at (530) 897-3400; or Lynda Gizzi, Public Information Officer, at (530) 896-7204.

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