



# RAPID CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

*Prepare, Prevent, Protect*



**To:** Mayor Sam Kooiker  
Members of City Council

**From:** Fire Chief Mike Maltaverne

**Subject:** 2013 Fireworks

**Date:** June 28, 2013

The decision was made jointly between the City and Destination Rapid City (DRC) to move the City's fireworks display from July to New Year's Eve. The action was confirmed by Council on February 18, 2013. The Fireworks contract is for \$30,000: \$20,000 of City dollars and \$10,000 from DRC. This was a decision made by both parties for ultimately what was best for Rapid City, our residents, visitors and business owners with an emphasis on public safety. The contract is signed for 2013 with the fireworks vendor for a New Year's show.

There are a number of public shows that take place each year such as the Elks Country Club, Arrowhead Country Club, BH Speedway, Post 22 and many other communities in the Black Hills that have displays. In addition, DRC is going to show the Mount Rushmore display on their big screen at Main Street Square similar to last year which was a huge success.

## **Issues with a July 4<sup>th</sup> display are these:**

**Fire danger:** In light of recent rain, we are entering the hot, dry season as we do every year at this time and all the nice, lush, "tall" green grass is curing out and now we will have 3-4 feet high brown grass, instead of one foot brown grass like last year which translates into more fuel for fires that start. We live in a fire prone region of the country. We experience a fire season every year. Some years are worse than others, but we live with fire every year to varying levels of severity. This will not change in the Black Hills any time soon. Remember that the fire danger indices are determined by temperature, winds, fuel moistures, etc. These are all things that we cannot predict far in advance which make planning events like a fireworks display extremely challenging.

**Lost revenue:** Each year, Executive GC had to be closed for 48-72 hours so the show could be set up, tore down and cleaned up. This resulted in an interruption to their operation and lost revenue.

**Public Safety:** RCFD and RCPD staff extra personnel to oversee the July 4<sup>th</sup> display. Even without the display, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July is one of three major weekends/holidays throughout the summer that tax our systems with routine calls for service. When you pack an extra 20,000 people into an already busy



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downtown corridor, traffic and access for emergency responders become a concern and our ability to handle a normally busy weekend is significantly impacted by the display and strains both Departments.

**Site:** If you travel the Founders Park area adjacent to Executive GC, you will notice several large apartment buildings and several duplex/condos, and an ever expanding system of trails within the Hansen Larson Memorial Park. All of which are new to that area (within the last 5 years or so). Should a fire occur from the display, the potential for a large evacuation of the apartment complex exists as well as placing hundreds of spectators lives at risk that have lined the trail system.

**Competition with other shows:** As mentioned, there are several shows going on in and around Rapid City already. Why compete. Why not support the other shows and get an “additional” display on New Year’s Eve. DRC has already committed to making the New Years Eve show a huge success with marketing, lining up vendors, assisting with the promotion of the event in accordance with other safe and fun activities to celebrate the New Year.

This decision was not made in a vacuum. The Fire Department sought input from the Police Department, Parks and Rec, Destination Rapid City and also the public after last year’s cancellation and subsequent activities at Main Street Square. I feel very comfortable with our decision based on the reasons listed. I am confident with the various other displays that are going on in and around our community, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration that Destination Rapid City has planned at Main Street Square and the wonderful fireworks display that is planned for New Year’s Eve, our citizens aren’t losing out, in fact, gaining another wonderful event.