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PRESS RELEASE

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Chico Man in Court on Felony Fireworks Case

A Chico man yesterday waived his preliminary hearing in Butte County Superior Court on a series of felony and misdemeanor charges caused when he was arrested for the discharge of fireworks during the recent firestorms in Butte County.

On July 4, 2008, Cal Fire personnel received a call that fireworks were being set off at the intersection of Bonham Road and Torry Drive, an extremely dry and thickly bushed area to the east of Mt. Ida Road east of Oroville. A Cal Fire engine was dispatched to the location where Curtis Ray Rowland, 47, was found in the middle of a significant number of discharged fireworks. Rowland told the firefighters the fireworks were so-called "safe and sane" fireworks he had earlier purchased in the City of Oroville.

Because of the extreme fire danger in Butte County during that time, which included several actively burning local wildfires, Cal Fire officials and District Attorney Mike Ramsey had earlier warned the public that all fireworks were strictly banned except within the city limits of Oroville and Gridley. These were the only cities in the county which allowed the sale and discharge of "safe and sane" fireworks for the 4th of July holiday period.

As Cal Fire personnel were preparing to arrest and cite Rowland for the possession and use of fireworks in the prohibited county area, they spotted a sawed-off shotgun through the open door of his truck. Sheriff's deputies were called and during a search incident to a felony arrest for the illegal shotgun, the deputies recovered methamphetamine, oxycontin and drug paraphernalia from Rowland's person and his truck. Felony drug charges were filed in addition to the felony gun charge and the misdemeanor fireworks charge.

Authorities indicated that Rowland, although from Chico, had been camping during the summer months on property he owned near the incident tending to a medical marijuana grow.

Ramsey noted that Rowland's use of the fireworks in that fire-prone area during a time of extreme fire danger was neither "safe nor sane." Rowland will be next in court on October 2 for the setting of his trial.