



CALIFORNIA FIRE PREVENTION OFFICERS

A SECTION OF THE CALIFORNIA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

SKY LANTERN WARNING



Media Release

July 16, 2013

The California Fire Prevention Officers has issued a warning on SKY LANTERN use. Sky Lanterns have been identified with serious fire and safety hazards. The California Fire Prevention Officers have declared a "DO NOT USE" tag for consumers with Sky Lanterns. These incendiary devices use burning material such as rubbing alcohol or a candle to heat the air in a bag made of tissue paper or very thin plastic. The heat makes the device lighter than air causing it to rise into the sky, staying aloft for 10 minutes to 2 hours. They can be very pretty to watch especially when they are released dozens or hundreds at a time such as at a wedding or some other celebration, **the problem is they are uncontrollable and have started wildfires and structure fires to a catastrophic level.**

A sky lantern may land when the flame is still alight, making it a fire hazard. In typical designs, as long as the lantern stays upright, it is believed the paper will not get hot enough to ignite, but if the balloon is tilted (by the wind or by hitting some object), it may catch fire while still in the air. All the paper will usually burn in a few seconds, but the flame source may remain lit until it hits the ground. Imagine an uncontrolled flame blowing over your property and landing in your tree or rooftop while you are unaware of the fire ignition.

It takes quite a bit of heat to lift the lantern, so the burn temperature is not just the same as a piece of paper, it is much hotter, and when it comes down it is still very, very hot.

On July 1st, 2013, a paper lantern started a massive fire at a recycling plant in London. The fire was so big it took more than 200 firefighters to put the fire out and 11 people were injured. Recently, the State Fire Marshal in Illinois declared the sky lanterns illegal due to the danger they can cause. They are also illegal in some areas of California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee and Virginia and prohibited in Maryland. The International Fire Code (IFC) states that all "recreational fires" must be attended by a person at all times until they are completely extinguished. Since a sky lantern is allowed to float away as the air inside the lantern rises in temperature, the flame inside the sky lantern cannot be constantly attended by a person until it is extinguished. The sky lantern is free to float to wherever the air currents take it. If a sky lantern is caught in a tree or lands on a roof and the fire spreads to whatever it gets caught in, this could turn into a tragic event.

The California State Fire Marshal Information Bulletin 12-005 cites Public Resources Code, Section 4435- *If any fire originates from the operation or use of any engine, machine, barbecue, incinerator, railroad rolling stock, chimney, or any other device which may kindle a fire, the occurrence of the fire is prima facie evidence of negligence in the maintenance, operation, or use of such engine, machine, barbecue, incinerator, railroad rolling stock, chimney, or other device. If such fire escapes from the place where it originated and it can be determined which person's negligence caused such fire, such person is guilty of a misdemeanor.*

For more information regarding Sky Lanterns, Sky Candles or Fire Balloons, visit <http://osfm.fire.ca.gov> or <http://www.opb.org/news/article/not-a-bright-idea-sky-lanterns-illegal-dangerous/> or search Sky Lanterns are dangerous to see results.