



FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES



safetyALERT

Sky Lanterns

The Office of Fire Prevention and Control has received numerous requests regarding the relationship of the Fire Code and sky lanterns, thus generating a need for clarification on the safety of these devices.

Sky lanterns are airborne paper lanterns, also known as Kongming Lanterns, "wish lanterns," are sometimes also referred to as Chinese lanterns, sky candles or fire balloons. They are constructed from oiled rice paper on a bamboo frame, and contain a small candle or fuel cell composed of a waxy flammable material. When lit, the flame heats the air inside the lantern, thus lowering its density causing the lantern to rise into the air. They are known to travel significant distance from the point of release which creates a serious fire and safety hazard because of the potential to start an unintended fire on or off the property from which they are released.

The Office of Fire Prevention and Control holds the opinion that sky lanterns meet the definition of Recreational Fires, as defined in Section 302.1 of the Fire Code and consequently, these devices require constant attendance as required in Section 307.5 of the Fire Code.

- *302.1 RECREATIONAL FIRE. An outdoor fire burning materials other than rubbish where the fuel being burned is not contained in an incinerator, outdoor fireplace, barbeque grill or barbeque pit and has a total fuel area of 3 feet (914 mm) or less in diameter and 2 feet (610 mm) or less in height for pleasure, religious, ceremonial, cooking, warmth or similar purposes.*
- *307.5 "open burning, bonfires, recreational fires and use of portable outdoor fireplaces shall be constantly attended until the fire is extinguished..."*

Therefore, unless anchored or tethered, OFPC is of the opinion that sky lanterns cannot be constantly attended and thus present a violation of the Fire Code of New York State.