



Supplemental Policy Clarification

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Number: 2013-01

Subject: To eliminate the fire/safety hazards associated with the use of sky lanterns.

Reference: 2012 IFC Section 308 (Open Flames)

Issue Date: Feb 27, 2013 Issued By: S. Kollar, Fire Prevention Officer

Approval Date: Jul 10, 2013 Approved By: C. Mathis, Fire Prevention Officer 

Revision Date: Revised By:

Issue/Question:

This policy shall apply to the regulation of sky lanterns. Sky lanterns are not specifically mentioned in the International Fire Code (IFC).

A sky lantern is a small airborne hot air balloon made of paper and a wire or bamboo frame with an opening at the bottom where a small fire is suspended and sustained by a fuel source. When released, the hot air produced by the small fire lifts the sky lantern to extreme heights allowing the device to drift for long distances until the fuel source decreases. Sky lanterns are typically released in large numbers to generate a remarkable visual effect. Sky lanterns may also be known as Kongming Lanterns, wish lanterns, Chinese lanterns or sky candles.

Discussion:

Sky lanterns can achieve significantly high altitudes and have uncontrolled/unpredictable flight paths. There is great potential for these devices to land on trees, vegetation, grass, wildland brush, combustible rooftops of structures and on other combustible materials while still ignited and start an unintended fire on or off the property from which they were released. Approximately 73%-76% of the Grand Junction Fire Department's service area consists of land use in the form of agricultural, wildland, riparian, and other vegetative states and under certain environmental conditions may be deemed vulnerable to wildfire risks. The use of sky lanterns does not just pose a fire risk to our immediate community, but the unpredictable flight paths of these devices may adversely affect neighboring communities as well.

The use of sky lanterns is regulated under the following International Fire Code sections:

2012 IFC Section 305.4 (Deliberate or negligent burning) - It shall be unlawful to deliberately or through negligence set fire to or cause the burning of combustible material in such a manner as to endanger the safety of persons or property.

2012 IFC Section 308.1.2 (Throwing or placing sources of ignition) - No person shall throw or place, or cause to be thrown or placed, a lighted match, cigar, cigarette, matches, or other flaming or glowing substance or object on any surface or article where it can cause an unwanted fire.

2012 IFC Section 308.1.5 (Location near combustibles) - Open flames such as candles, lanterns, kerosene heaters and gas-fired heaters shall not be located on or near decorative material or similar combustible materials.

2012 IFC Section 308.1.6 (Open-flame devices) - Torches and other devices, machines or processes liable to start or cause fire shall not be operated or used in or upon wildfire risk areas ... some exceptions apply that are not related to sky lanterns.

2012 IFC Section 102.9 and Section 104.1 specifically allow for matters not provided for to be determined by the Fire Code Official and to render code interpretations and adopt policies, procedures, rules, and regulations in order to clarify the application of code provisions.

Decision:

Based on the currently adopted International Fire Code (IFC), the uncontrolled and unpredictable flight path of the sky lanterns and the fire risk they pose, the use of sky lanterns within the City of Grand Junction and Grand Junction Rural Fire Protection District is not permitted.

Grand Junction Rural Fire District - Local Vegetation Map

