

Fire Prevention



Supplemental Policy Clarification

168 North Mesa Street, Fruita CO. 81521 Office: 970-858-3133 Fax: 970-858-7189

Website: www.lowervalleyfire.org

Fire Marshal	R.W. Pippenger
Subject:	To eliminate the fire/safety hazards associated with the use of sky lanterns
Reference:	2012 IFC Section 308 (open flames)

Issue/Question:	<p>The policy shall apply to the regulation of sky lanterns. Sky lanterns are not mentioned in the International Fire Code (IFC).</p> <p>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 a 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.</p>
Discussion:	<p>Sky lanterns can achieve high altitudes and have uncontrolled/unpredictable flight paths. There is great potential for these devices to land on trees, vegetation, grass, brush, combustible rooftops of structures and on other combustible material while still ignited and start an unintended fire on or off the property from which they were released.</p> <p>Approximately 90% of the Lower Valley Fire Protection District 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.</p>

	<p>The use of sky lanterns is regulated under the following International Fire Code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012 IFC Section 305.4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 person or property. • 2012 IFC Section 308.1.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 substances or object on any surface or article where it can cause an unwanted fire. • 2012 IFC Section 308.1.5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Location near combustibles- Open flames such as candles. Lanterns, kerosene heaters, and gas-fired shall not be located on or near decorative material or similar combustible materials. • 2012 IFC Section 308.16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 104.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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.
<p>Decision:</p>	<p>Based on the currently adopted International Fire Code (IFC), the uncontrolled and unpredictable flight path of the sky lantern and the fire risk they pose, the use of sky lanterns within the Lower Valley Fire District is not permitted.</p>