

**TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**Division of Code Enforcement**  
**Dale Robbins, Fire Marshal**

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## **SKY LANTERNS**

Sky lanterns are airborne paper lanterns, also known as Kongming Lanterns, wish lanterns, Chinese Lanterns, sky candles or fire balloons. They are typically constructed from oiled rice paper on a bamboo frame. The lanterns 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 similar to a miniature hot air balloon.

There are a number of safety concerns with these devices, ranging from the obvious fire risks to dangers to livestock and aircraft. A sky lantern may land when the flame is still alight making it a fire hazard. If the lantern stays upright the paper will not get hot enough to ignite, but if the balloon is tilted such as by the wind or by hitting an object, it may catch fire while still in the air. It is possible that the lanterns could land on a flammable ground or become entangled in trees or on a rooftop.

A sky lantern cannot be controlled once it is released. On average, a sky lantern can reach a height of approximately 3,000 feet or higher if the air is cooler. They are known to travel significant distances. The distance they can travel depends entirely on the wind speed. On a calm day the lantern will come down within 50 feet of where you are standing. But if there are winds then the lantern will travel at the same velocity and direction as the wind for the duration that it is airborne.

There is a serious fire and safety hazard associated with sky lanterns, which include the potential to start an unintended fire on or off the property from which they are released. The New Jersey Division of Fire Safety has determined that the use of these devices does not comply with the requirements in Chapter 3 of the Uniform Fire Code. As a result, the Lawrence Township Fire Marshal's Office prohibits the use of sky lanterns in the Township.