

February 25, 2013

General Information Notice 13-01

# Office of State Fire Marshal

## GENERAL INFORMATION NOTICE

**To: Local Fire Marshals**

**From: Robert J. Ross**  
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

**Topic: SKY LANTERNS**

The Office of State Fire Marshal has received numerous requests pertaining to the relationship of Connecticut's fire safety regulations and the use of sky lanterns prompting this clarification.

Sky lanterns are airborne paper lanterns similar to a mini hot air balloon, also known as Kongming Lanterns (wish lanterns), which are also referred to as Chinese lanterns, sky candles or fire balloons. These lanterns have been used at a variety of venues such as weddings, ceremonies and celebrations. These lanterns are often released in large numbers to generate an impressive visual effect.

They are constructed from oiled rice paper on a bamboo or wire frame and fueled by an open flame. When lit, the flame heats the air inside the lantern causing the lantern to rise into the air. The sky lantern is only airborne for as long as the flame stays alight, after which the lantern floats back to the ground. These lanterns are known to achieve an altitude of 1,500 feet and travel a 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.

As found in Connecticut General Statute §29-356, the definition of "**Fireworks**" includes in part "**the type of balloons which require fire underneath to propel the same**". Based upon this definition, we have determined that sky lanterns are considered "**fireworks**" by the Connecticut General Statutes. As such, pursuant to Connecticut General Statute §29-357, it is **illegal** for the general public to sell, possess or use such devices. Further, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §29-357 and the **CONNECTICUT FIREWORKS AND SPECIAL EFFECTS CODE**, the display of "Sky Lanterns" requires a permit and must be handled by a person holding a certificate of competency for special effects issued by the State Fire Marshal.

**ENFORCEMENT:** Use of sky lanterns is a violation of Connecticut General Statutes §29-357, Illegal possession of fireworks. State or local police may issue a misdemeanor summons.

**Should you have any further questions regarding this issue, please contact Sgt. Mark Grasso via the DESPP message center (800-842-0200 or 860-685-8190).**



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