



# State Fire Marshal Policy

## Interpretation on Sky Lanterns (Kongming Lanterns)

February 23, 2012  
Policy No.12-001

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### SCOPE:

This policy will provide guidance to Resident Fire Marshals (RFMs) on regulating sky lanterns, also known as Kongming Lanterns or “wish lanterns.” These devices are also referred to as Chinese lanterns, sky candles or fire balloons.

### PURPOSE:

The Office of State Fire Marshal has had numerous requests regarding the applicability of the Fire Code and sky lanterns. Based on the lack of specific clarification currently provided by the Fire Code, the Office of State Fire Marshal’s (OSFM) is rendering their interpretation based on both the 2006 IFC and 2012 IFC.

### BACKGROUND:

Sky lanterns are airborne paper lanterns that are a tradition found in some Asian cultures. 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.

The increased marketing and use of sky lanterns throughout South Carolina has generated a request for clarification on the legality of these devices.

### STATEMENT:

The OSFM has indicated these devices meet the definition of Recreational Fires, as defined in Section 302.1 of the Fire Code. These devices require constant attendance as required in Section 307.5 of the Fire Code which states, “open burning, bonfires, recreational fires and use of portable outdoor fireplaces shall be constantly attended until the fire is extinguished...”

There is a serious fire and safety hazard associated with sky lanterns, which includes the potential to start an unintended fire on or off the property from which they are released. **The OSFM official interpretation bans the use of these devices in South Carolina, unless anchored or tethered.**

### Disclaimer:

*The S.C. State Fire Marshal's policies or interpretations are located on the State Fire Marshal's website:*

<http://www.scfiremarshal.llronline.com>

*No other interpretation regarding this specific issue should be considered valid, unless located on the website.*