



TACOMA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Information Bulletin

Incendiary Releases – Sky Lanterns

The Law

Section 308.1.2 of the International Fire Code requires that “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.”

Background

Technically, “Sky Lanterns” are classified as incendiary devices with a random distribution pattern. Their inherent danger is that they have the potential to cause unintended fires. Devices similar in design were employed during WWII in an effort to create firestorms in the Western United States, thereby diverting manpower and financial resources from the war effort.

Any death, injury, or property damage as a result of the release of a Sky Lantern would most likely be investigated by the Washington State Patrol, local jurisdiction(s), as well as Federal agencies depending on the circumstances surrounding the resulting damage.

While the release of these types of novelties is not specifically identified, a person that releases an incendiary device such as these could face serious legal charges up to and including first degree arson, use of an incendiary device in the commission of a crime, manslaughter, and other felony charges.

These devices are not harmless diversions, and any person considering the construction and release of these devices should carefully evaluate the potential outcomes of their actions.

Requirements

There are no permits issued for this activity and the Tacoma Fire Department does not support the construction and release of these incendiary type devices.

