

Flying lanterns



Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service does not support the use of these devices and asks members of the public and event organisers to refrain from using them. Whilst these lanterns are undoubtedly a popular and beautiful sight, the potential damage they can cause is significant

Flying lanterns are also known as Chinese Lanterns, Wish Lanterns or Sky Lanterns. Traditional flying lanterns go back thousands of years in both Chinese and Thai celebrations, but are becoming more popular worldwide for celebrating weddings, birthdays, anniversaries or any other special event.

The lanterns are generally made from paper supported by a wire frame with a holder at the bottom for a solid fuel cell. The paper outer may or may not be fire retardant. Sizes and shapes vary usually 90cm high with a diameter of about 80cm. Flying times suggested by manufacturers vary from 6 minutes up to 20 minutes with heights claimed to be up to 1 mile!

Whilst lighting and launch are mostly in the control of the user, the actual flight path and end destination are usually not. There is no guarantee that the fuel cell will be completely out and cooled when the lantern eventually descends and any contact with a flammable surface could result in a fire developing.

There is evidence of them causing fires, wasting police time, misleading aircraft and killing livestock, additionally concerns have been raised by maritime authorities that lanterns released near the coast and drifting out to sea have been mistaken for distress flares.

If you do insist on setting off flying lanterns, please consider the following which details areas that should be avoided:

- Areas with standing crops
- Buildings with thatched roofs
- Areas of dense woodland
- Areas of heath or bracken, especially in dry weather



Below is a list that must be observed in order to use flying lanterns safely and responsibly:

- Lanterns should be used by responsible adults only
- Adults should not be under the influence of alcohol or any substance that could affect their level of responsibility
- Have water or other extinguishing facilities available at the launch site - lanterns or clothing may ignite if the correct launch procedures are not followed
- Keep the launch area clear of combustible materials
- Children and other observers should maintain a safe distance upwind of the launch area
- Two adults are required to correctly launch each lantern
- Do not attempt to launch damaged lanterns. Be aware that writing messages on the paper can cause damage
- Do not smoke whilst handling lanterns
- Launch Conditions and Area
- Ensure sufficient clearance to avoid obstacles such as trees, power lines or buildings
- Avoid launching near roads, especially major roads or motorways
- Avoid standing crops, especially in dry conditions
- Avoid areas that may allow confusion with distress signals
- Do not launch within 5 miles of any airport
- Do not launch in wind speeds in excess of 5 mph
- Check wind direction before launch
- Be aware of any other local conditions that could affect launch or landing safety such as thatched buildings, standing crops or dry heath land.

Launch Procedure:

Guidance is for consideration in addition to individual product instruction

- Unpack and assemble the components carefully to avoid damage
 - Remove packaging waste from the area
 - Gently pull the centre of the lantern up and start to inflate it by “dropping” to allow the air pressure to inflate. Take care not to damage the paper.
 - Hold the lantern upright and ask the second person to carefully light the fuel cell
 - Support the lantern gently as it inflates fully, it will eventually feel lighter and start to rise
 - Do not attempt to throw the lantern skyward, allow it to rise with support only
- Do not tether the lantern as this may cause instability which could lead to the lantern igniting

Call 999 if a lit lantern is observed landing near any property or woodland

