



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
FIRE DEPARTMENT
266 Broadway
Somerville, Massachusetts 02145

KEVIN W. KELLEHER
CHIEF ENGINEER

TEL: (617) 623-1700
FAX: (617) 625-8101

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2012

**CITING SERIOUS FIRE HAZARD, SOMERVILLE FIRE DEPT
BANS USE OF “SKY LANTERNS”**

*Open Flames Landing on Rooftops Create Significant Risks,
Especially in Densely Populated Areas*

SOMERVILLE – Chief Fire Engineer Kevin Kelleher announced today that the Somerville Fire Department had issued a citywide prohibition on the use of aerial “sky lanterns” or “wish lanterns.” The paper or cloth illumination devices are born aloft by the hot air generated from a candle, fuel cell or other open flame.

“These devices are inherently uncontrollable and unsafe,” said Deputy Fire Chief Patrick J. Sullivan III. “They can and do get blown onto rooftops before their fuel supply is exhausted, and they can easily start fires that are hard to detect until they become serious conflagrations. No one should be using devices of this kind over Somerville and, since we received reports on New Year’s Eve that someone had launched sky lanterns over the city, we want the public to know that the sky lanterns are completely banned.”

Sullivan noted that reports of sky lantern sightings were also posted to a local online community, the Davis Square LiveJournal, and that some witnesses had seen at least one device land on a roof.

“The State Fire Marshall has advised municipal Heads of Fire Departments that they can, based on local conditions, determine whether the use of these devices is allowed,” said Deputy Chief Sullivan. “For our densely-populated community, with so many wooden-framed homes side by side, these devices present a high potential for serious harm.”

Under the terms of Massachusetts General Law chapter 148 sec. 5 and sec. 10B, violators of the ban are subject to fines of up to \$1,000 per device.

“If you see these devices in use on the ground or in the air, please call 911 immediately,” Sullivan said. “In a city like ours, sky lanterns can lead to a very unhappy new year.”

- END -

Contact:

Dep. Chief Patrick J. Sullivan III, SFD Chief of Operations

617-623-1700 ext. 8115