

Concern over lanterns risk

FIREFIGHTERS have warned of the dangers posed by Chinese lanterns after concerns they could spark large farmland blazes.

The lanterns, used during Chinese and Thai celebrations for 2,000 years, have become popular at weddings and other celebrations in South Wales. Made of paper, they are able to float through the air thanks to their light weight and the heat generated by the small candle inside.

But fire crews have now called for the public to be aware of the possible hazards posed by lanterns after a number were found still smouldering on farms across the nation.

At one South Wales farm, firefighters said a barn full of hay could have caught alight after a Chinese lantern landed inside.

John Morgan, son of farmer Phillip Morgan, of Llwyn Yorath Farm, Betws, near Bridgend, was checking livestock when he discovered a

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smouldering Chinese lantern in the barn. He said: "I don't want to be a party pooper, but we would ask people to be careful when using Chinese lanterns."

Adrian Evans, Farmers' Union of Wales county executive officer, said: "The lantern could very well have set the barn and its contents of hay and straw on fire."

South Wales farmer and AM Andrew Davies, said: "I raised the matter in the Senedd and have asked for warnings to be put on lanterns. People should also be urged to buy the degradable lanterns."

He said livestock in England had died after swallowing the thin wire attached to lanterns.

Rob Morris, head of community safety at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, said: "Once these lanterns are released into the air there is no control over where they go and

they can travel a significant distance. The fuel cells in the lanterns have embers that can fall from the lantern, and these embers can carry on glowing for a number of minutes even after the flame has gone out and the lantern has landed.

"If a smouldering lantern was to land on dry farmland this could lead to a grass or mountain fire and spread across a large area of land.

"Grass and mountain fires are dangerous and unpredictable, and can quickly spread out of control. Firefighters battle against them under arduous conditions. These types of fire can also put lives of the public in danger because it can take us a few minutes longer to respond to incidents in the towns and villages of South Wales if we are on top of a mountain tackling a forest fire.

"We are therefore urging the public to please be aware of the possible fire hazards of Chinese lanterns being released into the air across Wales."



Firefighters worried about increasing numbers of Chinese lanterns floating across the countryside are asking people to be careful of the fire hazards