



The Office of the
Fire Marshal

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Fire Marshal's

COMMUNIQUÉ

du commissaire des incendies

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No. 2006-18

FIRE HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH OUTDOOR CITRONELLA WAX TORCHES/CANDLES

(External Distribution)

The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) has been informed that there is a potential fire hazard associated with the use of outdoor citronella wax torches/candles. This product usually consists of a cylindrical shaped wax candle supported along its entire axis by a long bamboo pole. The pole extends beyond the bottom of the wax portion and can be vertically inserted into a heat resistant surface so that the torch/candle can burn in an upright position. These torches/candles vary in length, with some being over 1 metre long, and come in a variety of coloured patterns. They are sold individually or in a multi-unit package under generic product names by a number of major retail chains and discount stores.

In tests conducted by a local fire department, hot flaming wax began dripping and flowing down after the torches/candles had been lit for a period of time. The flaming wax ignited combustible materials situated at ground level (dry grass, mulch), including the bamboo pole itself. Subsequently, the pole toppled and ignited other combustibles that were located further away.



Concerns were expressed that, if a consumer were to use one of these torches/candles in close proximity to combustible materials and leave it unattended, it could potentially develop into a significant fire and cause extensive property damage. The generic instructions provided with the packaging do not provide adequate information for the consumer to anticipate or prevent such an occurrence.

Health Canada routinely investigates complaints involving candles and fire related products and will be monitoring the situation to determine if further action is warranted. Health Canada recently posted information for consumers on its Web site about the torches/candles described above. This information can be found at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/house-domes/fire-feu/cand-boug/garden-torches-jardin_e.html. Should you receive any complaints about these torches/candles, please forward them to the OFM at (416) 325-3100 or contact Health Canada, Consumer Product Safety at (416) 973-4705.

The public is reminded that outdoor bamboo wax torches/candles should be used with extreme caution to ensure that they do not pose an unnecessary fire risk. Precautionary measures to be taken include:

- Use these products outdoors only.
- Ensure that the bamboo pole is securely supported in a vertical position on a flat, non-combustible and heat resistant surface (e.g., clear area of soil, bucket of sand) prior to igniting.
- Maintain a minimum clearance of twice the candle's length from combustible materials. For example, if using a 1 metre tall candle, no combustible materials should be located within a radius of 2 metres. Examples of combustible materials include a wood fence, mulch, grass, branches and other vegetation.
- Trim candle wicks to a length of 5 to 7 millimetres before lighting to prevent high flames.
- Keep burning torches/candles away from the reach of children and pets.
- Never leave burning torches/candles unattended.
- Keep adequate extinguishing agent nearby (fire extinguisher, pail of water, garden hose, etc.) for emergency purposes.
- In a non-emergency situation, extinguish the torch/candle after regular use by pouring water over the flame.

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