

Well-Identified Flying Objects

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Unmanned aerial vehicles or systems (UAVs, UASs; *drones*) have recently become widely available for all sorts of purposes. In addition to entertainment, they may be legitimately used for visual inspection in industry, agriculture, environmental sciences, monitoring, surveying, deliveries, etc.

They are now seemingly as numerous as model airplanes. There is concern that drone use in industrial sites and collision with equipment can cause damages, even fires/explosions. Recently there was an incident that involved a military drone in the process industry.

In the course of festivities, skyrocketers and other aerial fireworks can end up where flammable or combustible material is stored or handled, thus introducing a source of ignition.

Fire balloons (aka sky lanterns) are often used as an alternative to fireworks; they are sources of ignition as well – and they can travel much longer distances. There has even been one example where hot air balloonists could not avoid being driven towards a factory site, making an emergency landing inside a plant (see photo below and Beacon of April 2007: [Mr. Potato Head is Down](#)).



Did you know?

- In the balloon incident, good emergency response training, practice, and drills enabled the site personnel to deal with the emergency situation, although this one had never been anticipated.
- Apart from mechanical damages and direct fire hazards, flying objects may collide with overhead uninsulated power lines and cause short circuits & further consequences. This is regularly reported for those popular helium-filled decoration balloons made from PET foil with metallic surfaces.

What can you do?

- When you go for your control rounds, also check the sky.
- Report anything that threatens to fly over the plant grounds – apart from birds, of course.
- Be especially vigilant when it is the season for fireworks, sky lanterns and hot air ballooning.
- If there is a chemical plant, fuel store, or similar near where you live, advise your neighbors of the hazards if they plan activities involving fireworks or drones.
- If your facility uses drones, that activity should be permitted work like any other non-routine work.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above” – but some hazards come this way too!

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