

## Chinese Lanterns vs. Cell Phone Tower in Gastonia - May 2, 2015

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Who else saw Chinese lanterns floating through local skies last night? We watched at least three of them launched from the Boylan Heights bridge area, while the downtown fireworks were firing. Google can tell you all about the things, their centuries-old histories, and fire risks therein. (Such as the recycling plant in England that caught fire from a "sky lantern" in June 2013. Over two-hundred firefighters fought the estimated £6 million blaze.)

Closer to home was a cellphone tower that burned in Gastonia two month agos. Happened on the evening of May 2, 2015, at Carolina Speedway. Was a mass lantern launch at something called Lantern Fest. Attendees bought tickets that "guaranteed a lantern, decorations and ingredients to make s'mores," noted this [Gaston Gazette story](#) from April 25. The event operators had partnered with the American Cancer Society of Greater Charlotte.

Thousands of people attended. They released presumably thousands (or at least hundreds) of the paper lanterns at sunset. Then something unexpected happened. Several of the lanterns struck and became stuck in a nearby cell tower. Their fiery contents ignited wiring and insulation and started the evening's second light show. (The fire burned about 150 feet above the ground on the 250-foot tower, noted this [Gaston Gazette story](#) from June 2. The resulting repair costs were between \$200,000 and \$500,000.)

The Union Road Fire Department was already on site, staged for medical calls or brush fires. The resulting fire proved more than a little challenging. The department's ladder truck couldn't reach to the height of the fire. Nor were there any hydrants at the site. As this [TWC News story](#) notes, "it took 20 firefighters, nearly 6,000 gallons of water, [and] help from a neighboring department" (New Hope VFD) to extinguish the blaze.

As for the festival, it's probably not returning to the Charlotte Speedway.



*Lindsay via YourPics@WCNC.com photo*



*Charlotte Observer/URFD photo*

Sources:

- [Charlotte Observer](#)
- [Gaston Gazette - April 25](#)
- [Gaston Gazette - June 2](#)
- [TWC News](#)
- [Union Road Fire Department Facebook posting](#)
- [WSCO-TV](#)

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Although they are a great way to memorialize or honor someone, there is great risk vs reward. It is like letting a balloon go except you have added the fire concept to it. You never know where it will land. IMO, ban these things.

**Stike** ([Email](#)) - 07/26/15 - 11:47

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