

Hoverboard safety memo

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SPRINGFIELD – The Office of the State Fire Marshal would like to warn Illinois residents about fire hazards that have been posed by self-balancing motorized scooters known as “hoverboards.” Hoverboards were one of the most popular gifts of the holiday season but have come under recent scrutiny due to a number of incidents in which they have caught fire while charging or while in use.

Hoverboards are powered by rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. Historically, lithium-ion batteries have had fire-related problems in laptops, cell phones and electrical systems in airplanes. They have been known to burst into flames when recharging and sometimes while in use.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is investigating over 40 reported hoverboard fires that have occurred across 19 states, including Illinois. Most of these fires begin with a charging hoverboard igniting. Observers often report that a “pop” or “bang” noise accompanies the start of the fire. Some have destroyed homes and all have put people and property at risk. In one incident in Fox River Grove, Illinois, a battery pack reportedly overheated and exploded around 4:45 in the morning. Fortunately, the residents had a working fire extinguisher in their home and were able to put out the blaze before exiting and calling 911.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal advises Illinoisans to closely follow manufacturer instructions for charging the batteries. Charging should occur under supervision and away from combustible materials. Do not charge a hoverboard overnight or when you are not able to observe the board.

Furthermore, avoid buying hoverboards at unauthorized locations or websites that do not have information about who is selling the product and how they can be contacted if there is a problem. While this does not rule out counterfeits, the absence of such a mark means your safety is likely not a priority for that manufacturer.

For more information see the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s website at <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/>.