President, Board of Supervisors
District 8

City and County of San Francisco

RAFAEL MANDELMAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 17, 2026
Contact: Sophie Marie - 415-837-8944 - sophie.marie@sfgov.org

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Board of Supervisors Unanimously Approves President Mandelman's Legislation to Prohibit Sale of Hazardous Lockable Butane Lighters

Targeted Fire Code amendment removes continuous-flame lighters with plastic components from San Francisco's market while preserving commercial culinary uses and providing stronger enforcement tools to address preventable fires.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — Today, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously approved legislation introduced in September and sponsored by Board President Rafael Mandelman to prohibit the sale of locked butane lighters with plastic components in San Francisco.

The legislation responds to a growing number of butane-related fires in San Francisco. Between 2020 and 2025, the San Francisco Fire Department recorded more than 30 butane-related fire incidents, resulting in an estimated $3.2 million in property losses. These incidents included structure, garbage, outside, and other working fires. In 2025 alone, the Fire Department responded to more than 20 butane-related fire incidents, compared with three in 2020.

The legislation targets a specific type of torch-style butane lighter that can produce a continuous flame through a locking mechanism. In recent years, these devices have become increasingly visible on San Francisco streets in connection with drug use. If a person becomes incapacitated while using a locked butane lighter, the flame can continue burning unattended, creating a risk that nearby materials will ignite and/or the user could suffer serious injury.

The ordinance is narrowly tailored to butane devices that can produce a continuous flame through a locking mechanism and contain plastic components. Plastic components can degrade, melt, or fail when exposed to sustained heat, potentially contributing to secondary ignition. Manually operated butane lighters are not affected, and the ordinance makes clear that it is not intended to restrict standard commercial culinary uses.

“Lockable butane lighters have been used in commercial settings for decades. But in recent years, we have seen a significant increase in their use for illicit activities, while the Fire Department is responding to more butane-related fires,” said Board President Rafael Mandelman. “This legislation is a targeted response focused on the specific features that make these devices most hazardous: a locking mechanism that allows a flame to remain on and plastic components that can fail under sustained heat. I’m grateful to my colleagues for unanimously supporting this commonsense public safety measure. Ordinary manual lighters and standard culinary uses are not affected.”

“Lockable butane lighters pose a real and preventable public safety risk, and I’m proud to co-sponsor President Mandelman’s legislation to get the most dangerous versions of these devices off our streets,” said Supervisor Matt Dorsey, an early co-sponsor of the legislation. “This targeted approach gives the City stronger tools to reduce fire risks and address the unsafe use of these devices.”

"The SFFD has responded to too many fires, injuries, and other harmful incidents involving these devices and has seen their impact firsthand. We support legislation in San Francisco to ban the sale of disposable, lockable butane lighters and reduce the preventable harm they pose to our communities," said SFFD Chief Dean Crispen.

“Butane lighters are used in restaurant kitchens and we greatly appreciate the collaborative work from Supervisor Mandelman and his team to focus this legislation and avoid any unintended consequences for our restaurant community,” said the Golden Gate Restaurant Association.

The ordinance establishes several enforcement mechanisms. Each prohibited sale, offer for sale, or delivery would constitute a separate violation. Administrative penalties would be $500 for a first violation and $1,000 for each subsequent violation within one year.

The Fire Chief or their designee will have authority to enforce the ordinance and adopt rules, regulations, and guidance necessary for its implementation. The City Attorney can also seek injunctive and monetary relief, including attorneys' fees, without first receiving a Fire Department referral or notice of violation.

The ordinance is cosponsored by Supervisors Matt Dorsey, Alan Wong, Danny Sauter, and Stephen Sherrill. Following today's unanimous approval by the Board of Supervisors, the ordinance will proceed to the Mayor for signage. The ordinance will take place 30 days after being signed.

###