TENTS/CANOPIES/SPECIAL EVENTS INFORMATION PACKET

The following is basic information on the most common requirements for tents, canopies, temporary membrane structures, and special events.

There are other requirements that may be enforced, depending on the type of activity being conducted; therefore, it is critical that the University of Minnesota Building Code Division (BCD) be contacted prior to the placement of the structure.

DEFINITIONS

Tent

A temporary structure, enclosure shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except by air or the contents it protects.

Canopy

A temporary structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable materials supported by any manner, except by air or the contents it protects, and is open without side walls or drops on 75 percent or more of the perimeter.

Membrane Structure

An air-inflated, air supported, cable, or frame-covered structure, which is erected for fewer than 180 days and not otherwise defined as a tent or canopy.

PERMIT

A permit from the BCD is required prior to a special event, assembly of tents and temporary membrane structures having an area in excess of 200 square feet, and canopies in excess of 400 square feet.

The applicant must submit for approval a detailed drawing of the structure noting: its layout, location, separations from other structures, purpose, and the permit application.

An application for a BCD permit shall consist of the following properly completed documents:

- Permit Application
- Installer/Contractor
- Site Map

The permit for the use of tents or temporary membrane structures on a single premise shall not exceed a period of 180 days within a twelve-month period. They shall be removed prior to the expiration date documented on the permit.

INSPECTIONS

A member of the BCD will conduct an inspection for the approval of the permit application prior to the area being accessible to the public. You are strongly encouraged to schedule well in advance for any required inspections. Required inspection scheduling that provides at least 48 hours for metro area, and 72 hours for greater Minnesota will be accommodated subject to personnel availability. The installer/contractor and user shall be on site during the inspection.

Upon the inspector’s arrival, the structure shall be completely erected and compliant with all applicable code requirements. A copy of this document, site plan, and permit shall be available for the inspector.
**SEATING PLANS**

Evacuation plans shall include a detailed seating plan, occupant load, and occupant load limit. Deviations from the approved plans shall be allowed provided the occupant load limit for the occupancy is not exceeded and the aisles and exit access-ways remain unobstructed.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Assembly occupancies require an audible announcement be made not more than 10 minutes prior to the start of each program to notify the occupants of the location of the exits to be used in the event of a fire or other emergency.

**LOCATIONS AND SEPARATIONS**

Tents shall not be located within 20’ of property lines, buildings, other tents, parked vehicles, or other internal combustion engines. *Support ropes and guy wires are considered to be part of the structure when determining required separations.* Multiple tents may be connected or adjacent to each other provided the entire tent assembly is provided with sufficient exits to meet both the individual tent requirements and as a single large tent. Exiting from one tent into or through an adjacent tent is not an acceptable configuration.

**FLAME RESISTANCE**

A label shall be permanently affixed to the structure identifying the flame-retardant properties of the material. All portions of the structure shall meet the requirements of NFPA 701.

**SOURCES OF IGNITION**

Fireworks are not allowed within the tent or adjacent areas. Open flame sources including cooking appliances, candles may not be present unless approved by the *BCD.* “NO SMOKING” signs shall be conspicuously posted.

**OCCUPANT LOAD**

The following shall be used to determine the occupant load:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Occupant load factor (Square footage factor)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly-Concentrated Chairs only—not fixed</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly-Unconcentrated Tables and chairs</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occupant load shall be posted in a conspicuous place, near the main exit. Signs shall be of an approved legible permanent design.

**EXITS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th># of Exits</th>
<th>Min Width (Ten)</th>
<th>Min Width (Membrane Structure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 to 199</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 to 400</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 to 999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 to 1,999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 to 2,999</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 3,000</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>120*</td>
<td>96*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total width of all exits shall not be less than the total occupant load multiplied by 0.2 inches per person. Exiting through other tents is an unacceptable configuration.

**EXIT DISTRIBUTION**

Exits shall be spaced at equal intervals around the perimeter and located so no point within the tent is over 100’ from an exit. This measurement is determined as the travel path a person would be required to follow to reach the exit.
EXIT COVERS

Openings in the structure shall remain open unless covered by a flame-resistant curtain. Curtains are to be free sliding on a metal support, and when open, shall not obstruct the exit width. Curtains shall be a color that contrasts with the tent.

AISLES

The minimum width of any public aisle is 44”.

MAINTENANCE OF EXITS

The required clear width of all exits and aisles to a public way shall be maintained from any obstacles at all times.

EXIT SIGNS

An exit sign shall be provided for each exit when the occupant load exceeds 50.

Signs shall be of an approved self-luminous type or shall be internally or externally illuminated by fixtures that are capable of providing one foot-candle at the floor level. Occupant loads below 300 require two separate circuits, one of which shall be separate from all other circuits. Occupant loads over 300 will require two separate sources of power, one of which shall be an approved emergency system.

PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Fire extinguishers and other fire-protection appliances shall be provided in every tent, canopy, and temporary membrane structure as follows. Fire extinguishers may not be removed from adjacent buildings to provide protection for the tent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FROM (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>TO (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>QUANTITY (each)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,001</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,001</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,001</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each additional 2000 sq. ft. or fraction thereof add one additional 2A:10B:C extinguisher

At least one 40B:C rated fire extinguisher shall be provided for each kitchen, mess hall, power generator, or transformer and at locations where flammable or combustible liquids are used, stored, or dispensed.

HEATING/COOKING EQUIPMENT

Heating and cooking equipment are not allowed inside, or within 20’ of the structure unless approved. The installation of approved heating equipment inside shall not be within 10’ of exits or combustible materials and shall be vented to the outside by approved means. LP gas cylinders shall not be stored or used inside or within 10-25’ of the tent. Cylinders shall be secured in a manner to prevent movement or damage.

SPECIAL EVENT FOOD STANDS

All events where food is sold or given away require the approval of the University's environmental hygiene officer. For additional information and approvals, contact Mark Rossi at 612-625-6152 or rossi101@umn.edu.

www.bcd.umn.edu
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**FLAMMABLE/COMBUSTIBLE LIQUIDS**

Flammable and combustible liquids shall not be used within or adjacent to the structure. They shall be stored at least 50’ away from tents. Refueling of internal combustion engines such as generators shall not occur within 20’ of the structure.

**HOUSEKEEPING**

Weeds and other combustible vegetation shall be removed from within 30’ of the tent area.

Hay, straw, trash, and other combustible materials shall not be stored within 30’ of the tent.

The floor surface inside, including the grounds adjacent to or within 30’ outside, shall be kept free of combustible waste.

**PORTABLE RESTROOMS**

Plumbing fixtures shall be provided for the type of occupancy and in the minimum numbers as follows:

*Assembly: Water Closets*
  - Male 1 per 125
  - Female 1 per 65

*Assembly: Hand sink*
  - Male/Female – 1 per 200

One handicapped accessible unit shall be provided for each sex.

**GENERATORS**

All generators shall be of a type suitable for the locations in which they are installed.

All generators must be connected to a grounding electrode by a licensed electrician and inspected by the *BCD*.

Each generator shall be provided with a nameplate giving the manufacturer’s name, the rated frequency, power factor, number of phases if of alternating current, the subtransient and transient impedances, the rating in kilowatts or kilovolt amps, the normal volts and amps corresponding to the rating, rated revolutions per minute, insulation system class and rated ambient temperature or rated temperature rise, and time rating.

**UTILITY LOCATES**

Gopher State One Call is the one-call notification system established to inform all Minnesota underground facility operators of intended excavation. All excavations require anyone who engages in any type of excavation anywhere in Minnesota to provide notice at least 48 hours in advance. Locates can be obtained by contacting the following:

[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

651-454-0002 (Metro)
800-252-1166 (Greater Minnesota)

“Excavation" means an activity that moves, removes, or otherwise disturbs the soil by use of a motor, engine, hydraulic or pneumatically powered tool, or machine-powered equipment of any kind to a depth of 12” or more.