



Special Events

Temporary Structure and Outdoor Events

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide the events coordinator, owner, lessee, and the vendors the necessary information to ensure that tents used are in conformance with California State law.

CAL FIRE/San Luis Obispo County Fire provides fire protection, emergency medical, rescue and Fire Marshal services to the unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County. The Community Service Districts of Los Osos, Cayucos and Avila Beach are also included in this service area.

Scope

The scope of this standard is to establish consistent requirements for tents, temporary structures, or membrane structures. The provisions of Section 3103 are applicable only to temporary tents and membrane structures. The provisions of Section 3104 are applicable to temporary and permanent tents and membrane structures. Other temporary structures shall comply with the California Building Code.

These building standards govern the use of tents, awnings, or other fabric enclosures, including membrane (air-supported and air-inflated) structures and places of assemblage, in or under which 10 or more persons may gather for any lawful purpose.

California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, 303. (a) and (b)

- (a) The provisions of California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 2 apply to the sale, offering for sale, manufacture for sale, rental and use of tents within this state.
- (b) For building standards relating to tents and membrane structures, see California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 9.

Applicable Codes and Standards

Title 24 California Fire Code with local amendments (CFC)
Title 14 Public Resource Code
Title 19 Health and Safety Code
California Fire Code Chapter 31

- (a) The provisions of California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 2 apply to the sale, offering for sale, manufacture for sale, rental and use of tents within this state.
- (b) For building standards relating to tents and membrane structures, see California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 9.

Permit Required

A permit is required to use tents for places of assembly, ceremony, fairs and carnivals, worship, cooking, display of vehicles or equipment, competition, or the like.

Exception: A tent permit is not required for funeral services.

Tents, with or without sides, having an area in excess of 400 square feet shall not be erected, operated or maintained for any purpose without first obtaining a permit and approval from the San Luis Obispo County Fire Marshal's office.

Fire Department Permits

1. A permit is required for all tents and membrane structures that exceed 400 square feet in size and have (1) sidewall or more (Z30A \$234).
2. A permit is required for all tents and membrane structures that exceed 700 square feet in size that have no sidewalls.
3. An operational permit is required to conduct an outdoor assembly event where planned attendance exceeds 1,000 persons regardless of the presence of a tent or membrane structure (Z31A \$414).

Plan Submittal

Plans shall be submitted to the San Luis Obispo County Fire Marshal's office 30 days prior to the event.

Those plans will include:

1. An accurate scale or dimensioned site diagram indicating distances from any tents or temporary structures, location of planned event in proximity to permanent buildings, access drives, emergency access roads, parking areas, other tents or canopies, cooking and heating appliances and equipment, propane tanks, flammable liquids, pyrotechnic activities, stage locations, food or beverage service, and property lines, and roadways.^{1, 2, 6}
2. A statement which identifies the intended use of all structures and the dates for which the permit is required.
3. Flame retardant certificate(s) for tent/canopy material. (CCR Title 19, Chapter 2, Article 4.) The regulations of the State Fire Marshal for large and small tents, awnings and other fabric enclosures shall also apply.^{3, 4}
4. Dimensions for all tents, canopies and membrane structures include scale.⁵

5. Location of furnishings utilized in the tent (show location of tables/chairs/identify standing room only).
6. Identify proposed occupant load of each area.⁷
7. Identify exits include widths and type of door.⁸

Submit plans in pdf format along with a special event application to:
lore@mroberts@fire.ca.gov

After application review, an invoice will be generated for payment prior to application approval. Payment must be made by check, money order or cashier's check to San Luis Obispo County Fire Department.

Prior to event, an onsite inspection must be performed by San Luis Obispo County Fire Marshal's office. The person that was issued the permit is required to be on-site along with two copies of the permit and a copy of the approved set of plans. Inspection will be held to determine compliance with these requirements. Therefore, the inspection will be conducted once the tent or membrane structure, all furnishings and all equipment has been installed. In the event fire and life safety violations are found, the responsible person will be given one opportunity for compliance. Failure to adhere to these requirements may result in closure of the respective operation. It shall be the responsibility of the promoter to ensure vendors are aware of these regulations.

Plan Submittal Footnotes

¹ *ACCESS. Fire apparatus access shall be provided as outlined in CFC §503. Access roads shall have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet and an unobstructed vertical clearance of 13 feet, 6 inches.*

² *LOCATION. Temporary membrane structures and tents shall not be located within 20 feet of buildings, lot lines, parked vehicles, internal combustion engines, or other temporary membrane structures or tents. For the purpose of determining required distances, support ropes and guy wires shall be considered as part of the temporary membrane structure or tent. (CFC §3103.8.2) Vehicles necessary to the operation of the establishment shall be parked at least 20 feet from any tent. No other vehicle shall be parked less than 100 feet from any tent except vehicles parked on a public street shall park at least 20 feet from any tent. (CCR Title 19 Division 1 §312)*

³ *FABRIC CERTIFICATION AND LABELING FOR LARGE TENTS Before a permit is granted, the owner or agent shall file with the fire department a Certificate of Flame Resistance issued by a State Fire Marshal approved testing laboratory or by a State Fire Marshal approved applicator of a State Fire Marshal approved flame retardant chemical or by a State Fire Marshal approved manufacturer certifying that the tent(s) and their appurtenances; sidewalls, drops, tarpaulins, floor coverings, bunting and combustible decorative materials and effects, including hay and sawdust when used on floors, has been treated in an approved manner or is made of State Fire Marshal approved and listed inherently flame resistant fabric and that the flame retardant treatment is effective for the use period specified by the permit. Tent tops and sidewalls shall have a permanently affixed label by a California State Fire Marshal licensed applicator or manufacturer bearing the following information: 1) The Seal of Registration 2) If treated fabric, the name and registration number of the approved application concern and approved chemical used, and the date of treatment. 3) If registered fabric, the trade name and registration number of the approved fabric, and the date of production. LABEL Tents shall have a permanently affixed label bearing the identification of size and fabric or material type.*



^{24 pt. type}
WARNING
^{16 pt. type}
**KEEP ALL FLAME
 AND HEAT SOURCES
 AWAY FROM THIS
 TENT FABRIC**

^{12 pt. type}
This tent is made with flame-resistant fabric which meets CPAI-84 specifications. It is not fire proof. The fabric will burn if left in continuous contact with any flame source.
The application of any foreign substance to the tent fabric may render the flame resistant properties ineffective.

⁴ **REQUIRED LABELS REQUIRED CERTIFICATE FABRIC CERTIFICATION AND LABELING FOR SMALL TENTS** Small tents shall have a permanently affixed label bearing the following information as specified in CPAI-84. 1) Certification- A statement that the materials used in the manufacture of the item meet the flame resistance requirements of CPAI-84. 2) Manufacturer Identification. 3) Warning label stating the following: Warning, Keep all flame and heat sources away from this tent fabric. This tent is made with flame resistant fabric which meets CPAI-84 specifications. It is not fireproof. The fabric will burn if left in continuous contact with any flame source. The application of any foreign substance to the tent fabric may render the flame-resistant properties ineffective.

⁵ Tents or membrane structures and their appurtenances shall be adequately roped, braced, and anchored to withstand the elements of weather and prevent against collapsing. Documentation of structural stability shall be furnished to the fire code official on request.

⁶ Membrane structures having an area of 15,000 square feet (1394 m²) or more shall be located not less than 50 feet (15 240 mm) from any other tent or structure as measured from the sidewall of the tent or membrane structure unless joined together by a corridor. (CFC §3103.8.3)

⁷ Occupant Loads The occupant load allowed in an Assembly structure shall be determined in accordance with Chapter 10 of the CFC. Every room or space that is an Assembly occupancy shall have the occupant load of the room or space posted in a conspicuous place near the main exit or exit access doorway from the room or space. (CFC §1004.9)

Refer to CFC Table 1004.5 for calculating occupancy.

Assembly without fixed seats	7 net
Concentrated (chairs only)	5 net
Standing Space	15 net
Unconcentrated (tables/chairs)	

⁸ Egress - Minimum number of Means of Egress and Means of Egress Widths from Temporary Membrane Structures
Table 3103.12.2

OCCUPANT LOAD	Min number of means of Egress	Min. width of each Means of Egress (inches)-TENT	Min. width of each Means of Egress (inches)-Membrane Str.
10 to 199	2	72	36
200 to 499	3	72	72
500 to 999	4	96	72
1000 to 1,999	5	120	96
2,000 to 2,999	6	120	96
Over 3,000	7	120	96

1. *Means of egress shall be illuminated with light having an intensity of not less than one 1 foot-candle at floor level while the structure is occupied. Fixtures required for means of egress illumination shall be supplied from a separate circuit or source of power. (CFC 3103.12.6.1)*
2. *Exit signs shall be clearly marked. Exit signs shall be installed at required exit doorways and where otherwise necessary to clearly indicate the direction of egress when the exit serves an occupant load of 50 or more. (CFC 3103.12.6).*

Fire Protection

- **Fire Extinguishers**

Portable fire extinguishers. Portable fire extinguishers shall be provided as required by California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 2, Article 3, Section 319. Portable fire extinguishers shall be located in conspicuous locations where they will be readily accessible and immediately available for use along normal paths of travel. Portable fire extinguishers shall not be obstructed or obscured from view and shall be provided with a locating sign when deemed necessary by the San Luis Obispo County Fire Marshal's office.

- One Class 2-A fire extinguisher shall be provided in every tent having a floor area between 500 square feet and 1,000 square feet plus one 2-A fire extinguisher in each auxiliary adjacent tent. One additional extinguisher shall be provided for each additional 2000 square feet or fraction thereof.
- At least one Class 10 B-C fire extinguisher shall be provided with each generator or transformer.
- At least one Class 10 B-C fire extinguisher shall be provided in kitchen, dining areas, and at locations where flammable or combustible liquids or flammable gases are used, stored, or dispensed.
- A K-rated fire extinguisher shall be provided for all cooking applications utilizing grease or combustible cooking media (vegetable or animal oils or fats).

- **Fire Safety Personnel**

The owners or operators of any tent used as a place of assemblage shall provide at least one qualified fire safety person in every tent having a capacity of 500 persons and one additional qualified person for each 1,000 additional persons or fraction thereof. Such persons shall be on duty in the tent at all times when the tent is open to the public. They shall be proficient in the handling of fire extinguishers and equipment and shall be familiar with the fire and public safety regulations. The individual designated under this section shall meet the approval of the fire authority having jurisdiction.

- **Standby Personnel**

When requested by the fire code official, it is essential for public safety in a tent due to the use or the nature of the activity the owner, agent or lessee shall employ one or more qualified persons as required and approved to remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public and or activities are being conducted. Standby personnel shall keep diligent watch for fires and take prompt measures for extinguishment, assist in evacuation, and call 9-1-1.

- **Crowd Managers**

There shall be trained crowd managers or crowd managers/supervisors at a ratio of one crowd manager/supervisor for every 1,000 occupants.

- **Abatement of Fire and Panic Hazards**

Any condition that presents a fire hazard, would contribute to the rapid spread of fire, interfere with the rapid exit of persons from the tents, or interfere with or delay the extinguishment of a fire, shall be immediately corrected as ordered by the enforcing authority.

- **Housekeeping and Combustible Vegetation Removal**

The areas within and adjacent to the tent shall be maintained clear of all combustible materials and vegetation that could create a fire hazard within 30 feet. Combustible trash shall be removed at least once per day during the period that the tent is occupied by the public. The accumulation of combustible trash in the form of papers, boxes, etc., when stored next to open flame or hot cooking devices present a tremendous fire hazard. Hot oil can ignite other items and can cause serious and/or lethal burns. Use common sense and pay attention! Do not block your exits - always leave a clear and open path to the outside when you are working in a portable structure.

- **Weed Abatement and Vegetation Removal**

Vegetation, weeds, hay, straw trash, flammable materials and the like, shall be removed and stored a minimum of 50 feet from a tent.

- **Combustible Waste Material**

The floor surface inside tents and the grounds outside and within 30 feet in perimeter shall be kept free of combustible waste and other combustible materials that could create a fire hazard.

- **Clearance**

There shall be a minimum clearance of at least 3 feet between the fabric envelope and all contents located inside membrane structures.

- **Smoking**

Smoking shall not be permitted in tents or in any areas adjacent to where hay or other highly flammable materials are kept. Approved "NO SMOKING OR VAPING" signs shall be conspicuously posted in all tents open to the public and wherever otherwise specified by the enforcing authority.

- **Open Flames**

Open flame or other devices (candles, torches, and the like) emitting flame, fire or heat, lanterns or any flammable or combustible liquid, gas, charcoal or other cooking device, shall not be permitted inside or located within 20 feet of a tent unless approved by the fire code official.

- **Fireworks**

Fireworks will not be permitted under ANY circumstances.

- **Heating and Cooking Equipment**

- 1) Electrical heating and cooking equipment shall comply with the California Electrical Code.
- 2) Open flame or other devices emitting flame, fire or heat or any flammable or combustible liquids, gas, charcoal or other cooking device or any other unapproved devices shall not be permitted inside or located within 20 feet of the tent while open to the public unless approved by the fire code official.
- 3) Heating and cooking equipment shall not be located within 10 feet of exits or combustible materials.
- 4) Tents with sidewalls or drops where cooking is performed shall be separated from other tents by a minimum of 20 feet.
- 5) Outdoor cooking that produces sparks or grease laden vapors shall not be performed within 20 feet of a tent.
- 6) Solid flammables, butane or other similar devices which do not pose an ignition hazard shall be approved for cooking demonstrations and warming of food. Solid fuel cooking shall be isolated from contact with the public by physical guards, fencing, or enclosure.
- 7) Electrical heating and cooking equipment shall be approved by the fire code official.
- 8) All commercial cooking equipment located inside of a trailer or fully enclosed constructed booth made of permanent materials shall be provided with an approved automatic fire extinguishing system which is U.L. 300 compliant, bearing an approved service label as certified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal.
- 9) All barbeque cooking shall be conducted only outside of tents. Gas-fired barbeque shall be placed a minimum of 20 feet from any structure, overhang or fabric.
- 10) Solid fuel cooking shall be a minimum of 20 feet from any structure, overhang or fabric.

- 11) No combustible or flammable liquids shall be heated directly on any heater or cooking appliance. Substance such as candle wax shall be melted in containers set in boiling water (double boiler) to keep the wax from reaching its ignition temperature.
- 12) All deep fryers and other cooking appliances (i.e., pots, pans, woks, etc.) with a capacity of one (1) gallon (4 quarts) of cooking oil or more shall be kept outside of tents, trailers, or the like and placed a minimum of 20 feet away or shall be located under a commercial kitchen hood provided with a U.L. 300 compliant fire extinguishing system bearing an approved service label as certified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

- **Compressed Gas Cylinders**

- 1) Propane fired devices must be approved by Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or by the American Gas Association (AGA). These labels must be accessible for inspection.
- 2) Liquefied Petroleum (LP) gas containers of 500 gallons or less shall be located outside of the tent with a minimum separation distance of least 10 feet between container and structure and shall have the safety release valve pointed away from the tent.
- 3) Liquefied Petroleum (LP) gas containers of 500 gallons or more shall be located outside of the tent with a minimum separation distance of least 25 feet between container and structure and shall have the safety release valve pointed away from the tent.
- 4) All cylinders shall be stored in an upright position, adequately secured in place and protected to prevent accidental tip-over, tampering, unauthorized movement and damage by vehicles or other hazards.
- 5) Cylinders not in use shall be capped.
- 6) All compressed gas cylinders in use shall be equipped with individual regulators with approved hose and appliances.
- 7) All L.P. gas cylinders shall be within current hydrostatic test date, (no more than 12 years from date of manufacture, or no more than five (5) years from last hydrostatic test).

- **Flammable and Combustible Liquid Storage**

Flammable-liquid-fueled equipment shall not be used in tents. Storage of flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored outside in an approved manner and not less than 50 feet from tents. Refueling shall be performed in an approved location and not less than 20 feet from tents.

- **Electrical**

Electrical equipment and installations shall comply with the California Electrical Code.

Some temporary lighting may require an electrical permit. Contact the County of San Luis Obispo Building Department for requirements. Before an extension cord can be used with a portable appliance all the following must be met:

- 1) Extension cords shall be plugged directly into an approved receptacle.
- 2) Extension cords shall serve only one appliance or fixture.
- 3) Extension cords shall not exceed 75 feet in length and be no smaller than 16-gauge wire.
- 4) The current capacity of the cord shall not be less than the rated capacity of the appliance or fixture.
- 5) The extension cord is maintained in good repair, without splices, deterioration or damage.
- 6) The extension cord shall be of the grounded type when servicing grounded appliances or fixtures.
- 7) If an extension cord has to go across a traffic area, then an approved traffic pad shall be used.
- 8) All extension cords shall be secured to prevent a tripping hazard.
- 9) Extension cords shall not be connected in series.

- **Internal Combustion Power Sources – Generators and Similar Equipment**

Generators and other internal combustion power sources shall be separated from tents by a minimum of 20 feet and shall be isolated from contact with the public by fencing, enclosure or other approved means. All tripping hazards shall be secured.

- **Display of Motor Vehicles**

Batteries shall be disconnected in an appropriate manner. Vehicles shall not be fueled or defueled within and tent. Fuel tanks shall not exceed one-quarter of the tank capacity or 5 gallons whichever is less. Fuel systems shall be inspected for leaks and fuel tank openings shall be sealed to prevent the escape of vapors.

- **Seating Arrangements**

Where chairs and/or tables are used, the arrangement shall be such to provide aisles 44” wide where obstructions are placed on both sides.

With standard row seating, the spacing of chairs shall provide a space of not less than 12” from the back of one chair to the front of the most forward projection of the chair immediately behind. The rows of chairs shall be spaced not less than 33” back-to-back.

There shall be no more than 14 seats in any row of seats with aisles at each end. All loose seats, folding chairs or similar seating facilities that are not fixed to the floor shall be bonded together in groups of not less than three.

EXCEPTION: When not more than 300 such seats, chairs or facilities are provided, bonding thereof may be deleted. [CCR Title 19 Division 1]

- **Aisles**

The width of aisles without fixed seating shall be a minimum of 44 inches in seating areas and be progressively increased in width to provide not less than one foot of aisle width for each 50 persons served by the aisle. Arrangement of aisles shall be subject to approval by the fire code official.

- **Exiting and Occupant Load**

Tents shall have proper exiting in place. Each tent shall at least one exit and no less than the number of exits as indicated in the table below. Number of exits are based on the size of the tent, number of walls (sides) and occupant load. Maximum occupant load signs shall be posted when required by the fire code official.

Outdoor Assembly Events

Outdoor assembly events are regulated by Section 3106 of the California Fire Code. San Luis Obispo County Fire requires applicants to obtain an operational permit prior to the event. The applicant is responsible for submitting plans which include:

1. Access for emergency equipment
2. Fire service features (water supply/hydrant locations)
3. Occupancy load and means of egress.
4. Public Safety plan (CFC403.12.2)
5. Vegetation management plan
6. Cooking appliance use and protection
7. Liquefied petroleum gas use and locations
8. Electrical equipment and wiring
9. Generator locations
10. Portable fire extinguisher locations

Applications to hold events need to be authorized by the San Luis Obispo County Planning Department. The operational permit issued by County Fire is to ensure all life safety measures are being met and it is not approval for the event.