



# Tucson Fire Department

## Tent and Canopy Information

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The Tucson Fire Department is committed to help provide a safe environment for the public who occupy tents and canopies as well as those individuals involved with the erection and operation of these structures. All tents, canopies, and membrane structures, regardless of size, are regulated by the Tucson Fire Code. This handout summarizes the most common fire code issues encountered by our staff. Additional fire code requirements may also apply. Tucson Fire Department personnel will inspect your structure to assure compliance. If you have any questions or require further assistance please call (520) 791-4502.

### Definitions

1. **Tent:** A structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except by air or the contents that it protects. Tents having an area in excess of 400 square feet require a permit and approval from the fire code official.
2. **Canopy:** A structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except by air or the contents that it protects, and is open without sidewalls or drops on 75 percent or more of the perimeter. Canopies having an area in excess of 900 square feet require a permit and approval from the fire code official.
3. **Cooking Booth:** A structure (tent, canopy, or other construction) where food is prepared by a heating or cooking process such as, but not limited to, grilling, frying, barbecuing, deep fat frying, baking, broiling, boiling, or steaming.

### Permits

1. Tents and membrane structures having an area in excess of 400 square feet and canopies having an area in excess of 900 square feet shall not be erected, operated, or maintained for any purpose without first obtaining a permit and approval from the fire code official.
2. Tent and canopy permits can be obtained from the Development Services Department located at 201 North Stone Avenue, first floor north side. Their hours of operation are 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. They can be contacted at (520) 791-5550.
3. A detailed site and floor plan shall be provided for all structures requiring a permit.
4. Permitted structures shall not be occupied prior to fire department inspection and approval.
5. For final inspection, after the structure is complete, call the Fire Prevention Office at (520) 791-4502. For structures over 10,000 square feet in size call the Development Service Department at (520) 791-5550. Final inspections should be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance of any public event conducted within the tent.

6. Permits shall remain on the premises at all times and be clearly posted.

### **Construction and Location**

1. Anchorage

- All structures shall be adequately braced and anchored to prevent collapse or movement.
- Structures shall have staked anchor plates, tethered stakes, or water filled 55-gallon barrels at each structure post. In addition, tents or canopies 400 square feet or larger in size shall be secured with two steaks or two water filled 55-gallon barrels at each outside corner of the structure.
- Smaller (10 foot X 10 foot) pop-up type canopies may be secured in any manner that provides adequate anchorage.

2. Manufacture's recommended construction and use guidelines shall be followed for all structures. Additional requirements may be mandated by the Tucson Fire Code.

3. Booths or temporary structures used outside other than tents, canopies, and membrane structures, may be constructed of any material that will provide the necessary structural integrity and not pose a safety hazard to occupants or the public.

4. Cooking booths shall be separated from tents and canopies not being used as cooking booths by a minimum of 20 feet.

5. Exposed or non-exposed open flame cooking devices, open flames, or flammable and combustible liquids shall not be permitted inside or within 20 feet of tents, canopies, or membrane structures that are not considered cooking booths.

6. Tents, canopies, or membrane structures greater than 15,000 square feet in size shall be separated from lot lines and other tents, canopies, and membrane structures by at least 20 feet.

7. Tents, canopies, and membrane structures not used for cooking and 15,000 square feet or less in size shall not need to be separated. Tents, canopies, and membrane structures used for cooking shall be separated from tents and canopies used for other purposes by at least 20 feet.

8. Tents, canopies, and membrane structures shall be composed of flame-resistant material or shall be treated with a flame retardant in an approved manner. Structures shall have a permanently affixed label bearing identification of material type. Documentation shall be provided for material treated with a flame retardant. All decorative material within the tent or canopy shall be made of flame-resistant material or shall be treated with a flame retardant in an approved manner.

9. "No Smoking" signs shall be posted in conspicuous locations in all tents, canopies, and membrane structures.

10. The area adjacent to tents and canopies shall be maintained clear of combustible material and vegetation that could create a fire hazard.

### **Egress**

1. Exit doors, exit paths, and exit discharge areas shall be maintained free and clear of all obstructions at all times.

2. Panic hardware shall be the only locking hardware on doors that latch.
3. Exit openings from tents shall remain uncovered unless covered by a flame resistant curtain. The curtain shall be free sliding on a metal support that is a minimum of 80 inches above the floor. The curtain shall be of a contrasting color or be adequately marked otherwise indicating an exit opening.
4. Exit Signs
  - Exit signs shall be installed at all required exit openings on tents or canopies when the occupant load is 50 or more. (Example: A tent or canopy 1500 square feet or larger, used as a mercantile, would have an occupant load of 50 and require exit signs to be posted at the exits.)
  - Exit signs shall be internally or externally illuminated at all times.
  - Illuminated exit signs for structures with an occupant load of 50 to 300 shall be lit from two separate circuits. Illuminated exit signs for structures with an occupant load greater than 300 shall be lit from two separate sources of power, one of which shall be an approved emergency system.
  - Externally illuminated exit signs shall have plainly legible letters not less than 6 inches high. The word “exit” shall be in contrast with the background.
  - Exit signs shall be posted where necessary to indicate the direction of egress when the occupant load is 50 or greater.
5. Egress Lighting
  - The means of egress shall be lit at all times that the tent or canopy is occupied. This illumination shall have an intensity of not less than 1 foot-candle at floor level. During daylight hours natural light may provide the required light intensity. At night an additional source of light may be required. When an additional source of lighting is required emergency lighting shall be provided in case of power failure.
  - Emergency lighting
    - a. Emergency lighting is required in tents and canopies when the occupant load is 50 or greater.
    - b. Power for an emergency lighting system shall be provided by an emergency electrical system capable of providing power for 90 minutes.
6. The required width of aisles shall be maintained clear and free from obstructions at all times. The surface of the means of egress shall remain free from tripping hazards. Support ropes and guy wires shall not cross the means of egress at a height less than 8 feet.

## **Electrical Requirements**

1. All electrical service shall be in accordance with the 2002 National Electrical Code and local amendments.
2. All exterior electrical equipment and wiring shall be GFCI protected.
3. Only listed power strips with circuit breaker protection are allowed as multi-plug adapters.
4. All extension cords shall be of the 3-wire grounded type.
5. Extension cords shall be free of any splices and protected from foot traffic.

## **Cooking and Heating**

1. Exposed or non-exposed open flame cooking devices, open flames, or flammable and combustible liquids shall not be permitted inside or within 20 feet of tents, canopies, or membrane structures that are not considered cooking booths.
2. Only electrically powered warming devices are approved for use in tents or canopies that are not considered cooking booths. These devices are limited to situations that do not pose a risk to occupants involved in other activities within the structure.
3. If electrically powered cooking appliances are utilized on a table the table shall be flame-resistant, or a flame-resistant covering shall be placed under the appliance.
4. For information regarding cooking booths refer to the Tucson Fire Department Exterior Cooking Booth Information sheet.
5. LP-gas fueled heating equipment shall not be used within tents or canopies that are not considered food booths.
6. Electrically powered heating equipment used in tents and canopies shall comply with the 2002 National Electrical Code and local modifications.
7. Heating equipment shall not be located within 10 feet of exits or combustible material.

## **Fire Department Access**

1. Tents, canopies, and membrane structures shall be accessible to fire apparatus at all times. The establishment of temporary fire apparatus access roads may be required.
2. Fire apparatus access roads (fire lanes) shall be not less than 20 feet wide and 15 feet in height.
3. Signs or other approved notices shall be provided to identify and prohibit the obstruction of temporary fire apparatus access roads.

## **Fire Precautions**

1. Open flame and flammable or combustible liquids shall not be permitted inside or within 20 feet of a tent, canopy, or membrane structure that is not considered a cooking booth.
2. Combustible waste and vegetation shall be removed from the area occupied by a tent, canopy, or membrane structure.
3. Combustible waste shall be stored in approved containers and shall not be allowed to accumulate in a manner that would pose a fire hazard.
4. Fire Extinguishers
  - A portable fire extinguisher with a minimum 2A rating shall be provided at every tent or canopy.

- If several smaller tents or canopies are arranged in long lines then extinguishers need not be provided at every structure, but shall be provided at least every 75 feet travel distance.
- Extinguishers shall be located in a conspicuous location near the tent or canopy exit.
- Extinguishers shall be maintained unobstructed and shall not be obscured from view.
- Extinguishers shall be mounted on hangers or brackets in a manner that allows the extinguisher to be removed easily.

This information sheet provides the minimum requirements for tents, canopies, and membrane structures. Additional fire and life safety requirements may be necessary depending on the particular situation. These requirements will be at the discretion of the fire code official.

