



SAN DIEGO FIRE-RESCUE

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION DIVISION

GUIDELINE TITLE	GUIDELINE NUMBER
TRADE SHOWS AND EXHIBITS	E-1.5

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to familiarize event promoters, sponsors and vendors with information about special events procedures and general fire safety regulations that are enforced by the Fire-Rescue Department Community Risk Reduction Division (CRRD). The Department is committed to promoting public safety and assisting all parties to provide a level of service that will ensure a safe and successful event.

The trade show and/or exhibit shall not be permitted to operate without an approved permit from the Fire Marshal.

II. PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS

A. The completed [Application for a Single Event Permit](#) package shall be submitted at least two weeks (10 business days) prior to the event. A \$300 fee will be charged for applications submitted less than two weeks (10 business days) prior to the event. Applications received less than 5 business days before the event may not be reviewed. See the [Special Event Permit Fees](#) for the current rates.

- B. The application shall be submitted with a detailed site plan and floor plan with the following:
1. The square footage of the proposed venue.
 2. The location and arrangement of booths, registration area, cooking equipment and all other furniture or additions for the event.
 3. Identify the lobby and foyers intended for use.
 4. The location of all fire protection equipment (fire extinguishers, fire alarm pull-stations, fire hose cabinets, etc.).
 5. The means of egress.
 6. The locations and widths of exits and aisles.
 7. The locations of exit signs.
 8. The type and location of any heating and electrical equipment, where applicable.
 9. The location of any covered or multiple-level booths.
 10. Construction documents for any covered or multiple-level booths.
 11. The storage locations and quantities of any highly combustible goods.
 12. The location and type of any vehicle displays, where applicable.

C. The Deputy Fire Marshal will review the application and the detailed site plan and floor plan. The applicant will be contacted for any additional questions, concerns or required modifications. Once the application is approved, the applicant will receive an email with a copy of the approved permit. A copy of the approved permit shall be available on-site of the event. The trade show or exhibit shall be set up as approved in the permit and is subject to an inspection at any time by the Deputy Fire Marshal.



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III. EXITS AND AISLES

- A. Booths which require 50 feet or more of travel distance to reach the exit access aisles shall be provided with a minimum of two exits remote from each other.
- B. Aisles shall be a minimum of 10 feet in assembly and exhibition halls unless otherwise approved by the Deputy Fire Marshal.
- C. Exits and aisles shall be clear of all obstructions. This includes charts, easels, trailer tongues, etc.
- D. Exit signs shall be visible from any location in the room. If they are not visible, additional exit signs shall be posted to show the direction of travel to the exit.
- E. Loading doors shall be closed before opening the show and/or exhibition and shall remain closed while the show is open to the public.

IV. LOBBY/FOYER AREA

A lobby/foyer area may be utilized for registration provided:

- A. Storage of combustibles necessary for registration (i.e. paper, boxes, etc.) shall be limited to one day's supply.
- B. Registration booths and lounge areas shall be set up only in the designated areas as shown on approved plans and shall not impede required egress.

V. FIRE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT

- A. Exhibit booths that are multi-level, consist of multiple rooms with ceilings, or are over 120 square feet with ceilings, shall be protected with smoke detectors.
- B. Vehicles, boats, tents and similar exhibited products having over 100 square feet of roofed area shall be provided with smoke detectors.
- C. See Section IX (A)(7) for cooking and warming device requirements.
- D. Clear access shall be maintained to all fire protection equipment (i.e. extinguishers, fire alarm pull-stations, fire hose cabinets, etc.).
- E. A 3-foot clearance shall be provided around fire protection equipment.

VI. COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS

- A. Materials are required to be flame resistant.
- B. All decorations, drapes, signs, banners, acoustical materials, straw, moss, split bamboo, plastic cloth, and similar decorative materials shall be flame resistant to the satisfaction of the Fire Marshal. This may require a field flame test to verify a satisfactory flame-retardant treatment.
 - 1. Field Flame Test: Materials shall not ignite and allow flame to spread over the surface when exposed to an open match flame. When a flame is held to the material for twelve seconds and continues to burn when the flame is removed, it is not flame-retardant.
- C. Some fabric and other materials are manufactured as flame resistant and will be labeled as such.
- D. Table coverings must be flame-retardant treated unless they lie flat with an overhang of no greater than six inches.
- E. Combustible materials which are 3/8 inch or more in thickness, glass or asbestos cloth may be used without flame-retardant treatment.



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- F. Certain materials cannot be made flame resistant and their use is therefore prohibited. These include oilcloth, tar paper, sisal paper, nylon, orlon and some other plastic materials.
- G. Combustible materials shall be limited to a one-day supply and shall be maintained in an orderly fashion.
- H. Combustible materials (i.e. crates and boxes) shall be stored outside the building in an approved area or in a storeroom having a fire resistance rating of at least two hours which is protected by an automatic fire extinguishing system.

VII. ELECTRICAL WIRING

- A. All electrical wiring shall:
 - 1. Be heavy duty SJ or better
 - 2. Be a minimum of 16 gauge - 3 wire
 - 3. Carry no more than 1200 watts maximum load on any cord
 - 4. Not be spliced
- B. Powertaps must be listed and provided with overcurrent protection. Cube adaptors and other devices which increase outlets must meet the same requirements as powertaps.

VIII. FLAMMABLE/HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

- A. Materials prohibited inside a building include:
 - 1. Compressed flammable gases (i.e. acetylene, hydrogen, propane, butane, etc.)
 - 2. Flammable/combustible liquids (i.e. gasoline, kerosene, cleaning solvents and other petroleum-based materials; and any other product labeled "flammable")
 - 3. Hazardous chemicals (i.e. pool chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, "poison," etc.), although it is permissible to have empty product containers for display purposes
 - 4. Explosives and blasting agents
- B. Nonflammable gases which are allowed inside the building must be secured in an upright position.
- C. Ammunition may be allowed under certain conditions. The stipulations shall be written for each trade show and/or exhibition.
- D. Any exceptions must be approved by the Fire Marshal.

IX. OPEN FLAME

- A. Open flame devices are prohibited. However, candles may be used when approved by the Fire Marshal. Candles must be securely supported on a substantial noncombustible base so located as to avoid danger of ignition of combustible materials. The candle flame shall be protected.
- B. See Section X (A) below for sterno use.
- C. Welding or soldering is prohibited.



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X. COOKING AND/OR WARMING DEVICES AS WELL AS HEATING PRODUCTS

These devices may be used under the following circumstances:

- A. The devices shall be electric and shall be approved by a recognized testing laboratory (i.e. UL, FM).

Note: Sterno may be used for warming trays.

- B. The devices shall be separated from the public by either placing the device a minimum of 4 feet back from the front of the booth or by providing a Plexiglas shield between the cooking and/or warming device and the public.
- C. Individual devices shall not exceed 288 square inches of surface area (i.e. 12 inches x 24 inches).
- D. The table surface holding the device shall be of noncombustible material.
- E. A minimum of 2 feet shall be kept between cooking devices.
- F. Combustible materials shall be kept a minimum of 2 feet away from any device.
- G. A 20B:C extinguisher shall be provided. In addition, either a tight-fitting lid for each device shall be provided or an approved automatic extinguishing system shall be provided within the booth.
- H. A warming device shall only require a 2-A:10B:C extinguisher.

XI. VEHICLES

Vehicles may be allowed in the building for display purposes provided they meet the following requirements:

- A. All fuel tank openings shall be locked or securely taped in order to prevent the escape of flammable vapors.
- B. The engine starting system shall be made inoperable or batteries must be disconnected, except where batteries must remain connected to maintain safety features where approved by the Fire Code Official.
- C. Batteries in electric vehicles shall be rendered inoperable by removing fuses or other approved methods to prevent the vehicle from being moved.
- D. Fueling or removing fuel from the tank inside the building is prohibited.
- E. Fuel tanks shall not be over 1/4 tank full or contain more than 5 gallons of fuel, whichever is less.
- F. Vehicles shall not be moved during show hours.
- G. Sufficient separation between vehicles on display must be created to prevent the spread of fire or other hazards to adjacent vehicles.
- H. No vehicle charging shall take place in the building. All necessary charging must take place in the loading dock area or other suitable locations outside the building.

XII. TEMPORARY SPECIAL EVENT STRUCTURES (TSES)

A permit is required for [Temporary Special Event Structures](#) greater than 400 square feet. This includes any ground-supported structure, platform, stage, stage scaffolding or rigging, canopy, tower supporting audio or visual effects equipment or similar structures.



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XIII. INSPECTIONS

- A. An inspection may be conducted at the discretion of the Deputy Fire Marshal. If the inspection is not during regular business hours an [additional fee](#) will be assessed.
- B. Building management shall be responsible for the correction of all fire code violations found. All violations are required to be corrected within the time determined by the Fire Marshal.
- C. The trade show and/or exhibition shall not be permitted to operate without an approved permit from the Fire Marshal.

If there are any questions, contact the CRRD Special Events Section at (619) 533-4388 or sdfdevents@sandiego.gov.