

Use of Tents and Temporary Structures for Outdoor Dining, Beverage Service and Events

The use of tents and membrane structures have become prevalent within the State *Blueprint for a Safer Economy* for outdoor dining, beverage service, and events when such businesses are required to operate outdoors. CAL FIRE - Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) encourages expedited approval of designated facilities and operations but reminds everyone that the California Code of Regulations Title 19 and Title 24 continue to remain in effect.

Given the critical nature of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, OSFM is providing expedited certification of tents, permitting tent and/or fabric manufacturers to field label tents after contacting the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and permitting tents to be field treated by a State Fire Marshal certified flame-retardant General Applicator.

The OSFM provides statewide fire prevention regulations for the use of tents, awnings, or other fabric enclosures. Below are some important elements of the statutes and regulations.

Approval of Tents, Temporary Structures and other Membrane Structures

A permit from the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department is required for all tents and structures covering an aggregate area greater than 400 square feet. The permit application can be downloaded at:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/singleapp.pdf> **In addition to these regulations, all state and local public health directives shall also be followed.**

Tent and Membrane Structure Materials

California regulations require that all tents manufactured, sold, rented, or used be made from nonflammable material or material treated with a flame-retardant chemical approved by OSFM.

Each section of the top and sidewalls of large tents (ten or more occupants) shall have the State Fire Marshal seal of registration label. Small tents (nine or less occupants) may have a registration label meeting the provisions of CPAI-84; otherwise the State Fire Marshal seal of registration label is required.

Fuel-Fired Heating Appliances

Any heaters with open flame, open flame elements, or exposed heating elements are prohibited from being used inside a tent or structure. Per manufacture recommendations, these types of appliances should only be used in open outdoor space areas with plenty of air flow.

Examples of fuel fired appliances include:



The storage or use of portable outdoor gas-fired heating appliances is prohibited inside of tents and membrane structures. Additionally, LP-Gas cylinders shall not be stored inside restaurants or businesses at any time.

Forced air heaters may be used to heat tents and membrane structures as these units are positioned on the outside of a tent with heat pumped in through a duct under the sidewall of the tent. Examples are provided below:

Examples of forced air heating appliances include:



Electric heating appliances

Portable electric heating appliances shall be listed for its specific use and labeled by an approved testing laboratory. All appliances shall be used per the appliance's listing for its approved location and use type. Portable electric heating appliances must also be equipped with a tip-switch cutoff and have concealed heating elements. Heating appliances shall be used in accordance with the California Electric Code (CEC).

Examples of electric heating appliances include:



Additional code requirements

Tents, canopies, and membrane structures shall not be installed within 20 feet of buildings unless approved by the fire code official. 2019 California Fire Code (CFC) §3103.8.2

Tents, canopies, and membrane structures shall be installed a minimum of 20 feet from parked vehicles or internal combustion engines. Title 19 CCR §312

There shall be a clearance of not less than 3 feet between the fabric sides of a tent, canopy or membrane structure and all contents located inside the tent, canopy, or membrane structure. 2019 CFC §3107.8

Electrical power serving tents and temporary structures shall be in accordance with the California Electrical Code (CEC).

Extension cords serving tents or membrane structures shall be protected by a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) and shall be protected from damage in accordance with the CEC.

Where flexible cords or cables are used to provide power to the tent or structure, they shall be listed for extra-hard usage. Where flexible cords or cables are used and are not subject to physical damage, they shall be permitted to be listed for hard use. Where used outdoors, flexible cords and cables shall also be listed for wet locations and shall be sunlight resistant. CEC §525

Tents 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. 2019 CFC §3103.9

Means of egress shall always be maintained. Title 19 CCR §3.11

Flammable vegetation, materials and combustible waste is not permitted within 50 feet of the tent or membrane structure. Title 19 CCR §326

Smoking shall not be permitted in tents. Approved “No Smoking” signs shall be conspicuously posted. Title 19 CCR §316

Portable fire extinguishers shall be provided. Title 19 CCR §319

Generators and other internal combustion power sources shall be separated from tents, canopies, or membrane structures by a minimum of 20 feet and shall be isolated from contact with the public by fencing, enclosure, or other approved means. All generators shall be bonded and grounded. 2019 CFC §3107.16

Liquids having a flash point below 200°F shall not be stored in any tent nor less than 50 feet from any tent. Title 19 CCR §324

If sidewalls are used, tents or structures shall be designed to allow for adequate cross-ventilation. 50% of the tent or structure shall have non-adjacent impermeable walls in accordance with CDPH-Cal/OSHA guidelines for Use of Temporary Structures for Outdoor Business Operations.