



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Fire-Rescue Department

TRADE SHOWS AND EXHIBITS

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 Fire Prevention Bureau. The Department is committed to promoting public safety and assisting all parties to provide a level of service that will insure a safe and successful event.

The licensee shall have a valid permit from the Fire Prevention Bureau for each trade show and/or exhibition. No exhibit or trade show shall occupy any exhibit hall without the approval of the Fire Marshal.

I. Permit Application Process

- A. The permit application, [Application for a Single Event Permit](#) (PDF), can be completed online and mailed in. You may also contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at 619 533-4400 to request that an application be faxed, mailed or e-mailed to you. An application may also be requested over the counter at our office at 1010 2nd Avenue, Ste. 400, San Diego, CA 92101.
- B. The completed application shall be turned in no later than two weeks prior to the event. It can be dropped off or mailed to Fire Prevention Bureau, Attn: Special Events, to the address above or it may be faxed to 619 533-4426.
- C. The application shall be submitted with the following:
 1. name of the trade show and/or exhibition;
 2. name and address of the site of the setup;
 3. date and time of setup of trade show and/or exhibition;
 4. time for inspection;
 5. square footage of area;
 6. approximate anticipated maximum occupant load; and
 7. two sets of plans, which shall contain the following information:
 - a. the location of all exits;
 - b. the width of the aisles;
 - c. the location of any lobby(ies) and intended use;
 - d. the location of fire alarm pull boxes, fire hose cabinets, fire extinguishers, etc.; and
 - e. the location of booths and the registration area.
- D. The application and plans will be reviewed, with any required modifications noted. If approved, the plans will be stamped "Approved," initialed and dated, and returned to the applicant. The Fire Prevention Bureau will retain one copy of the plans.
- E. Plans which are stamped "Not Approved" will be required to be resubmitted.
- F. The initial inspection will be conducted on the date indicated on the permit.
- G. The trade show and/or exhibit shall be set up as indicated on the approved plans.



II. 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 ten feet in assembly and exhibition halls.
- 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.

III. Lobby Area

- A. A lobby area may be utilized for registration provided:
 - 1. storage of combustibles necessary for registration (i.e. paper, boxes, etc.) shall be limited to one day's supply and
 - 2. 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.

IV. Fire Protection Equipment

- A. Exhibit booths that are multi-level, consist of multiple rooms with ceilings, or are over 225 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 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.

V. Combustible Materials

- A. Materials required to be Flame Resistant
 - 1. 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.
 - 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.Some fabric and other materials are manufactured as flame resistant and will be labeled as such.
 - 2. Table coverings must be flame-retardant treated unless they lie flat with an overhang of no greater than six inches.

3. Combustible materials which are 3/8 inch or more in thickness, glass or asbestos cloth may be used without flame-retardant treatment.
 4. 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.
- B. Other Combustible Materials
1. Combustible materials shall be limited to a one day supply and shall be maintained in an orderly fashion.
 2. 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.

VI. Electrical Wiring

- A. All electrical wiring shall:
- a. be heavy duty SJ or better;
 - b. be a minimum of 16 gauge - 3 wire;
 - c. carry no more than 1200 watts maximum load on any cord; and
 - d. 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.

VII. 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"). Any exceptions must be approved by the Fire Marshal.
 3. hazardous chemicals (i.e. pool chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, "poison," etc.), although it is permissible to have empty product containers for display purposes; and
 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.

VIII. 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 IX (A)(a) below for sterno use.
- C. Welding or soldering is prohibited.

IX. Cooking and/or warming devices as well as heated products

A. These devices may be used under the following circumstances:

1. The devices shall be electric and shall be approved by a recognized testing laboratory (i.e. UL, FM).
 - a. Note: Sterno may be used for warming trays.
2. 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.
3. Individual devices shall not exceed 288 square inches of surface area (i.e. 12 inches x 24 inches).
4. The table surface holding the device shall be of noncombustible material.
5. A minimum of 2 feet shall be kept between cooking devices.
6. Combustible materials shall be kept a minimum of 2 feet away from any device.
7. A 20BC 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.

A warming device shall only require a 2A10BC extinguisher.

X. Vehicles

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

1. All fuel tank openings shall be locked or securely taped in order to prevent the escape of flammable vapors.
2. Both battery cables shall be disconnected from the terminals during the time the vehicle is in the building. Loose cable ends shall be taped to cover all exposed metal.
3. Fueling or removing fuel from the tank inside the building is prohibited.
4. Fuel tanks shall not be over 1/4 tank full or contain more than 5 gallons of fuel, whichever is less.
5. Vehicles shall not be moved during show hours.

X. Inspections

- A. A spot inspection may be conducted at any time during the course of the trade show and/or exhibition.
- B. A pre-opening inspection shall be conducted.
- C. 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.
- D. The trade show and/or exhibition shall not be permitted to open without the approval of the Fire Marshal.

If there are any questions, call Special Events at 619 533-4400.