



Fire Department

HEADQUARTERS

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CODE SUMMARY

PERMITS - TENTS AND OTHER MEMBRANE STRUCTURES

A code summary is a compilation of code sections related to a specific occupancy or permit. This code summary lists sections of code pertaining to occupancies and operations as defined by the **California Fire Code**. Under each heading you will find the correlating code language and the reference cited. These requirements pertain to existing buildings. New construction may be subject to additional requirements. Please feel free to direct any questions to the Fire Prevention Division at (805) 681-5500.

SCOPE:

These requirements 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.

Exceptions:

- 1.) Tents and awnings used to cover or enclose private swimming pools on the premises of private one and two- family dwellings.
- 2.) Tents used to conduct committal services on the ground of a cemetery.
- 3.) Tents or awning erected and used within a sound stage, or other similar structural enclosure which is equipped with an overhead automatic sprinkler system.
- 4.) Fabric structures which are part of mobile homes, recreational vehicles or commercial coaches.

1. A permit is required before any tent or membrane structure larger than 400 square feet can be erected.

Tents and membrane structures 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 fire code official.

Exceptions:

1. Tents used exclusively for recreational camping purposes.
2. Tents open on all sides which comply with all of the following:
 - 2.1) Individual tents having a maximum size of 700 square feet.
 - 2.2) The aggregate area of multiple tents placed side by side without a fire break clearance of 12 feet, not exceeding 700 square feet total.
 - 2.3) A minimum clearance of 12 feet tall structures and other tents.
2. Funeral tents. (CFC 105.6.43)

2. When a permit is required, a "Tent Application" and map must be submitted to Santa Barbara County Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division a minimum of 48 hours prior to structure setup.

A "Tent Application" can be obtained on-line by visiting the Santa Barbara County Fire Department website at www.sbcfire.com. Complete the application and return to Santa Barbara County Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division at 4410 Cathedral Oaks Road, Santa Barbara, CA. 93110.

3. **Tents and other membrane structures cannot be up for more than 180 days during any calendar year.**
Temporary tents, air-supported, air-inflated or tensioned membrane structures shall not be erected for a period of more than 180 days within a 12-month period on a single premise. (CFC 3103.5)

4. **In most cases tents cannot be located within 20 feet of lot lines, other buildings, other tents, parked vehicles or combustion engines. All support systems (cables, ropes) are considered part of the tent when calculating the 20 feet. Some exceptions apply when the tent is smaller than 15,000 square feet and there is no cooking being performed in the tent.**
Tents or membrane structures shall not be located within 20 feet of lot lines, buildings other tents or membrane structures, parked vehicles or internal combustion engines. For the purpose of determining required distances, support ropes and guy wires shall be considered as part of the temporary membrane structure or tent.
Exceptions:
 1. Separation distance between membrane structures and tents not used for cooking is not required when the aggregate floor area does not exceed 15,000 square feet.
 2. Membrane structures or tents need not be separated from buildings when all of the following conditions are met:
 - 2.1) The aggregate floor area of the membrane structure or tent shall not exceed 10,000 square feet.
 - 2.2) The aggregate floor area of the building and membrane structure or tent shall not exceed the allowable floor area including increases as indicated in the California Building Code.
 - 2.3) Required means of egress are provided for both the building and the membrane structure or tent including travel distances.
 - 2.4) Fire apparatus access roads are provided in accordance with Section 503.
 3. When approved by the enforcing agency, tents may be located in or on permanent buildings provided such use does not constitute an undue hazard. (CFC 3103.8.2)

5. **Tents and other membrane structures must be properly secured and braced to prevent a collapse and/or unsafe conditions.**
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. (CFC 3103.9)

6. **Combustible materials including hay, straw or shavings are not allowed in a tent holding an assembly of people unless the materials are necessary for the daily care of animals.**
Hay, straw, shavings or similar combustible materials shall not be located within any tent or membrane structure containing an assembly occupancy, except the materials necessary for the daily feeding and care of animals. Sawdust and shavings utilized for a public performance or exhibit shall not be prohibited provided the sawdust and shavings are kept damp. Combustible materials shall not be permitted under stands or seats at any time. (CFC 3104.5)

7. **Smoking is not allowed in tents and “No Smoking” signs must be posted.**
Smoking shall not be permitted in tents or membrane structures. Approved “No Smoking” signs shall be conspicuously posted in accordance with Section 310. (CFC 3104.6)

8. **Open flame, cooking devices, charcoal and any other flammable or combustible liquids are not allowed in tents or within 20 feet of tents and canopies unless specifically approved by the Fire District.**
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 or membrane structures while open to the public unless approved by the fire code official. (CFC 3104.7)

- 9. At least one 2-A fire extinguisher will be needed for tents between 500 and 1,000 square feet. One additional extinguisher will be needed for each additional 2,000 square feet. One 10 B-C extinguisher will be needed for each generator and any kitchen or dining areas.**

Portable fire extinguishers shall be provided as follows:

- A. 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 extinguishers in each auxiliary adjacent tent. One additional extinguisher shall be provided for each additional 2,000 square feet or fraction thereof.
- B. At least one class 10 B-C fire extinguisher shall be provided with each generator or transformer.
- C. At least on 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. (CFC 3104.12)

- 10. Fire extinguishers shall be certified for year of use and have a current State Fire Marshal certification tag attached. (CFC 906.2)**

- 11. Fire extinguishers shall be located in a conspicuous location and clearly visible at all times. (CFC 906.5)**

- 12. Fire hydrants cannot be obstructed by any tent at any time.**

Unobstructed access to fire hydrants shall be maintained at all times. The fire department shall not be deterred or hindered from gaining immediate access to fire protection equipment or fire hydrants. (CFC 507.5.4)

- 13. Temporary electrical installations are allowed for up to 90 days and must meet the standards of the California Electrical Code.**

Temporary wiring for electrical power and lighting installations is allowed for a period not to exceed 90 days. Temporary wiring methods shall meet the applicable provisions of the California Electrical Code. (CFC 605.9)

- 14. Temporary wiring attached to a structure must be done in an approved manner.**

Temporary wiring attached to a structure shall be attached in an approved manner. (CFC 605.9.1)

- 15. Any electrical hazards must be corrected or eliminated. Any equipment that is modified or damaged and may cause an electrical shock or other hazard must be removed.**

Identified electrical hazards shall be abated. Identified hazardous electrical conditions in permanent wiring shall be brought to the attention of the responsible code official. Electrical wiring, devices, appliances and other equipment that is modified or damaged and constitutes an electrical shock or fire hazard shall not be used. (CFC 605.1)

- 16. Extension cords used must be rated appropriately for the equipment being supplied by the cord.**

The ampacity of the extension cords shall not be less than the rated capacity of the portable appliance supplied by the cord. (CFC 605.5.2)

- 17. Extension cords must be plugged directly into approved power devices. Multiplug devices with fuses can run multiple appliances but single outlet extension cords should only run one device.**

Extension cords shall be plugged directly into an approved receptacle, power tap or multiplug adapter and, except for approved multiplug extensions cords, shall serve only one portable appliance. (CFC 605.5.1)

- 18. Unapproved multiplug adaptors, cords or devices cannot be used.**

Multiplug adapters, such as cube adapters, unfused plug strips or any other device not complying with the California Electrical Code shall be prohibited. (CFC 605.4)

19. Exits should be spaced at equal intervals around the structure and all points should be 100 feet or less from an exit.

Exits shall be spaced at approximately equal intervals around the perimeter of the tent or membrane structure, and shall be located such that all points are 100 feet or less from an exit. (CFC 3103.12.1)

20. Tents must have at least one exit and not less than the exit required in Table 3103.12.2. Total width of the means of egress must be at least .2 inches per person.

Tents, or membrane structures or a usable portion thereof shall have at least one exit and not less than the number of exits required by Table 3103.12.2. The total width of means of egress in inches shall not be less than the total occupant load served by a means of egress multiplied by 0.2 inches per person. (CFC 3103.12.2)

OCCUPANT LOAD	MINIMUM NUMBER OF MEANS OF EGRESS	MINIMUM WIDTH OF EACH MEANS OF EGRESS (inches)	
		TENT	MEMBRANE STRUCTURE
10 to 199	2	72	36
200 to 499	3	72	72
500 to 999	4	96	72
1,000 to 1,999	5	120	96
2,000 to 2,999	6	120	96
Over 3,000	7	120	96

21. Exit opening must remain open unless flame-resistant coverings in contrasting colors of the tent are used. Coverings must be free sliding and a minimum of 80 inches in height.

Exit openings from tents shall remain open unless covered by a flame-resistant curtain. The curtain shall comply with the following requirements:

- A. Curtains shall be free sliding on metal support. The support shall be a minimum of 80 inches above the floor level at the exit. The curtains shall be so arranged that, when open, no part of the curtain obstructs the exit.
- B. Curtains shall be of a color, or colors, that contrasts with the color of the tent. (CFC 3103.12.3)

22. Exits must be clearly marked with approved exit signs

Exits shall be clearly marked. Exit signs shall be installed at required exit doorways and where otherwise necessary to indicate clearly the direction of egress when the exit serves an occupant load of 50 or more. (CFC 3103.12.6)

23. Exit signs must be illuminated.

For occupant loads greater than 49, exit signs shall be either listed and labeled in accordance with UL 931 as the internally illuminated type and used in accordance with the listing or shall be externally illuminated by luminaries supplied in the following manner:

- A. Two separate circuits, one of which shall be separate from all other circuits, for occupant loads of 300 or less; or
- B. Two separate sources of power, one of which shall be approved emergency system, shall be provided when the occupant load exceeds 300. Emergency systems shall be supplied from storage batteries or from the on-site generator set, and the system shall be installed in accordance with the California Electrical Code. The emergency system provided shall have a minimum duration of 90 minutes when operated at full design demand. (California Fire Code 3103.12.6.1)

24. Emergency lighting is required for all tents.

Means of egress shall be illuminated with light having an intensity of not less than 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 3103.12.7)

25. Exit openings must be free of obstructions including guy ropes and support members.

The required width of exits, aisles and passageways shall be maintained at all times to a public way. Guy wires, guy ropes and other support members shall not cross a means of egress at a height of less than 8 feet. The surface of means of egress shall be maintained in an approved manner. (CFC 3103.12.8)

23. Proof must be submitted that all parts of the tent are approved by the California State Fire Marshal's office.

Before a permit is granted, the owner or agent shall file with the fire code official a certificate executed by an approved testing laboratory certifying that the tents and membrane structures and their appurtenances; sidewalls, drops and tarpaulins; floor coverings, bunting and combustible decorative materials and effects, including sawdust when used on floors or passageways, are composed of material meeting the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701 or shall be treated with a flame retardant in an approved manner and meet the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701, and such flame propagation performance criteria are effective for the period specified by the permit. (CFC 3104.2)

24. Every panel of the tent must have the seal of the State Fire Marshal attached.

Membrane structures or tents shall have a permanently affixed label bearing the identification of size and fabric or material type. (CFC 3104.3)

25. When more than 200 seats (without tables) are used, the chairs must be fastened together in groups of 3 or more.

In places of assembly or portions thereof without ramped or tiered floors for seating and with greater than 200 seats, the seats shall be fastened together in groups of not less than three or the seats shall be securely fastened to the floor. [CFC 1028.12(3)].

26. The number of people allowed into the tent cannot exceed the posted occupancy limit.

Overcrowding or admittance of any person beyond the approved capacity of the building or a portion thereof shall not be allowed. The fire code official, upon finding any overcrowding conditions or obstructions in aisles, passageways or other means of egress, or upon finding any condition which constitutes a life safety hazard, shall be authorized to cause the event to be stopped until such condition or obstruction is corrected. (CFC 107.5)

27. Aisles with seating on both sides must be 42 inches wide. Aisles with seating on just one side must be 36 inches wide.

Aisles shall be 42 inches for level or ramped aisles having seating on both sides. Aisles shall be 36 inches for level or ramped aisles having seating on only one side. (CFC 1028.9.1.)

28. Aisles must remain clear at all times.

There shall be no obstructions in the required width of aisles except for handrails. (CFC 1028.9.6)

29. Tents where cooking is performed shall be separated from other tents by at least 20 feet.

Tents with sidewalls or drops where cooking is performed shall be separated from other tents or membrane structures by a minimum of 20 feet. (CFC 3104.15.5)

30. Cooking and heating equipment cannot be located within 10 feet of exits or combustible materials.

Cooking and heating equipment shall not be located within 10 feet of exits or combustible materials. (CFC 3104.15.3)

31. Outdoor cooking processes that produce sparks or grease-laden vapors have to be 20 feet from any tent.

Outdoor cooking that produces sparks or grease-laden vapors shall not be performed within 20 feet of a tent or membrane structure. (CFC 3104.15.6)

32. Equipment using flammable liquid fuels cannot be used in tents.

Flammable-liquid fueled equipment shall not be used in tents or membrane structures. (CFC 3104.17.1)

33. Flammable and combustible liquids must be stored 50 feet from tents.

Flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored outside in an approved manner not less than 50 feet from tents or membrane structures. Storage shall be in accordance with Chapter 34. (CFC 3104.17.2)

34. Refueling of appliances should be done at least 20 feet away from tents or canopies.

Refueling shall be performed in an approved location not less than 20 feet from tents or membrane structures. (CFC 3104.17.3)

35. LP containers must be located outside the tent and safety release valves should be pointed away from the tent.

LP-gas containers shall be located outside. Safety release valves shall be pointed away from the tent or membrane structure. (CFC 3104.16.2)

36. LP-gas containers less than 500 gallons must be at least 10 feet away from the tent.

Portable LP-gas containers with a capacity of 500 gallons or less shall have a minimum separation between the container and the structure not less than 10 feet. (CFC 3104.16.2.1)

37. LP-gas containers more than 500 gallons must be at least 25 feet from the tent.

Portable LP-gas containers with a capacity of more than 500 gallons shall have a minimum separation between the container and structures not less than 25 feet. (CFC 3104.16.2.2)

38. LP-gas containers should be protected from tampering or damage from vehicles or other hazards including tipping.

Portable LP-gas containers, piping, valves and fittings which are located outside and are being used to fuel equipment inside a tent or membrane structure shall be adequately protected to prevent tampering, damage by vehicles or other hazards and shall be located in an approved location. Portable LP-gas containers shall be securely fastened in place to prevent unauthorized movement. (CFC 3104.16.3)

39. Generators must be at least 20 feet from any tent and shall be isolated from the public with fencing or other enclosures.

Generators and other internal combustion power sources shall be separated from tents 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. (CFC 3104.19)

40. Standby Personnel may be required.

When in the opinion of the fire marshal, it is essential or public safety in a tent or membrane structure used as a place of assembly because of the number of persons or the nature of the performance or exhibition, the owner shall employ

one or more qualified persons to remain on duty during the times that the structure is open the public. See California Fire Code Chapter 31 for standby personnel requirements. (CFC 3104.20)

40. Combustible vegetation must be cleared within 30 feet around any tent.

Combustible vegetation that could create a fire hazard shall be removed from the area occupied by a tent or membrane structure, and form areas within 30 feet of such structures. (CFC 3104.21)

41. The area inside and outside of tents must be maintained free of combustible materials that could create a fire hazard.

The floor surface inside tents or membrane structures and the grounds outside and within a 30- foot perimeter shall be kept free of combustible waste and other combustible materials that could create a fire hazard. Such waste shall be stored in approved containers and removed from the premise at least once a day during the period the structure is occupied by the public. (CFC 3104.22)

42. Exits, aisles and passageways must remain clear at all times.

Exits, aisles and passageways shall not be blocked or have their minimum clear width obstructed in any manner by ticket offices, turnstiles, concessions, chairs equipment, animal chutes, poles or guy ropes, or anything whatsoever, nor shall they be blocked by persons for whom no seats are available. (CFC 3104.23)