



## STANDARDS FOR TENTS, CANOPIES, AND TEMPORARY MEMBRANES

*Authority Cited: 2013 Edition California Fire Code (CFC)  
City of San José Municipal Code Section 17.12.250*

These standards shall apply to any temporary membrane structure, tent, or canopy accordance with the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 19.

Temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies shall be used for a period of not more than 180 days within any 12-month period at a single facility unless approved by the local Building Official.

A tent or temporary membrane structure having an area in excess of **400 square feet (37m<sup>2</sup>)** 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 (65m<sup>2</sup>)**.
  - 2.2 The aggregate area of multiple tents placed side by side without a fire break clearance of 12 feet (3658 mm), not exceeding 700 square feet (65m<sup>2</sup>) total.
  - 2.3 A minimum clearance of 12 feet (3658 mm) to all structures and tents.

## **A. DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions shall apply:

**Canopy** - A temporary structure, enclosure, or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable materials supported in any manner other than by air or the contents it protects, which is open, without side walls or drops on 75 percent or more of the perimeter.

**Temporary Structure** - Any enclosure or shelter constructed of materials as described in the California Fire Code (CFC) and erected for a period of less than 180 days.

**Tent** - Any temporary structure, enclosure, or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported in any manner other than by air or the contents it protects.

## **B. ACCESS, LOCATION, AND PARKING**

1. Fire apparatus access shall be provided as outlined in CFC §503.2.1. Access roads shall have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet with vertical clearance of 13 feet, 6 inches.

2. Temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies shall not be located within 20 feet of buildings, property lines, parked vehicles, internal combustion engines, or other temporary membrane structures, tents, or canopies. For the purpose of determining required distances, support ropes and guy wires shall be considered as part of the temporary membrane structure, tent, or canopy.

***Exception:*** Separation distance between temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies not used for cooking is not required when the aggregate floor area does not exceed 15,000 square feet. Also, the Fire Marshal may approve tents located in or on permanent buildings provided that such use does not constitute an undue hazard.

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### **C. STRUCTURAL STABILITY**

Temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies and their appurtenances shall be adequately braced and anchored to prevent weather-related collapse. Documentation of structural stability shall be furnished to the Fire Chief upon request.

### **D. FLAME RETARDANT TREATMENT AND STANDARDS**

1. Side walls, drops, and tops of temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies shall be composed of flame-resistant material or shall be treated with a flame retardant in an approved manner. All floor coverings, bunting, combustible decorative materials and effects, including sawdust when used on floors or passageways, shall be composed of flame-resistant material or shall be treated with a flame retardant in an approved manner.
2. The grounds outside and adjacent to or within 30 feet of temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies shall be kept free and clear of combustible wastes. Such wastes shall be stored in approved containers until removed from the premises.
3. Temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies shall have a permanently-affixed label bearing the following information:
  - a. Identification of temporary membrane structure, tent, or canopy, size and fabric or material type;
  - b. For flame-resistant materials, necessary information to determine compliance with this standard;
  - c. For flame-retardant treated materials, the date that the temporary structure, tent, or canopy and other combustible materials were last treated with an approved flame retardant;
  - d. The trade name and type of flame retardant utilized in the flame-retardant treatment;
  - e. The names of the person and firm that applied the flame retardant.

**E. MAXIMUM OCCUPANT LOAD**

Occupant load requirements shall be in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 10 of CFC.

**F. EXITS**

1. Exits shall be spaced at approximately equal intervals around the perimeter of the temporary membrane structures, tents and canopy and shall be located such that all points are 100 feet or less from an exit.

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**F. EXITS (Continued)**

2. Exits shall be provided in accordance with the following table:

**CFC TABLE 3103.12.2  
MINIMUM NUMBER OF EXITS AND EXIT WIDTHS FOR  
TEMPORARY MEMBRANE STRUCTURES, TENTS AND CANOPIES\***

Occupant Load	Minimum Number Of Exits	Tent or Canopy Exit Opening Size	Air-supported Structure Exit Opening Size
10 to 199	2	72 in.	36 in.
200 to 499	3	72 in.	72 in.
500 to 999	4	96 in.	72 in.
1,000 to 1,999	5	120 in.	96 in.
2,000 to 2,999	6	120 in.	96 in.
Over 3,000	7	120 in.	96 in.

\* 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. Such widths of means of egress shall be divided approximately equally among the separate means of egress.

3. Exit openings from tents shall remain open unless covered by a flame-resistant curtain as follows:
  - a. Curtains shall be free sliding on a metal support. The support shall be a minimum of eight (8) feet above the floor level at the exit. Curtains shall be so arranged that, when open, no part of the curtains obstruct the exit; and
  - b. Curtains shall be of a color, or bear markings that will contrast with, the color of the tent.

## **G. DOORS**

Exit doors shall swing in the direction of exit travel. To avoid hazardous pressure loss from air-supported structures, such doors shall be automatic closing against operating pressures. Opening force at the door edge shall be in accordance with the Building Code.

## **H. MAINTENANCE OF MEANS OF EGRESS**

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

## **I. EXIT ILLUMINATION AND SIGNAGE**

1. Means of egress shall be illuminated with light having an intensity of not less than one (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 when occupant load exceeds more than 300.
2. Exit signs shall be installed at required exit doorways and where otherwise necessary to clearly indicate the direction of egress when the exit serves an occupant load of 50 or more.
3. Exit signs in temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies with occupant loads of more than 100 persons shall be of an approved self-luminous type or shall be internally or externally illuminated by fixtures supplied in the following manner:
  - a. For occupant loads of 300 or less, two separate circuits, one of which shall be separate from all other circuits, shall be provided.
  - b. When the occupant load exceeds 300, two separate sources of power, one of which shall be an approved emergency system, shall be provided. Emergency power shall be supplied from storage batteries or on-site generator set, and the system shall be installed in accordance with the Electrical Code.

## **J. SEATING ARRANGEMENTS AND AISLE SPACING**

1. Seating arrangements and aisle spacing shall be in accordance with Chapter 10 of the California Fire Code and meet the approval of the Fire Marshal.
2. For situations without fixed seats, the minimum clear aisle width shall be 36 inches where seats, tables counters, furnishings, displays, and similar fixtures or equipment are placed on one side of the aisle only, and 44 inches when such fixtures or equipment are placed on both sides of the aisle.
3. Aisles shall terminate at a cross aisle, foyer, doorway, or vomitory. Aisles shall not have a dead end greater than 20 feet in length.
4. When seating rows have 14 or fewer seats, the minimum clear width between rows shall not be less than 12 inches measured from the back of one seat to the nearest projection of the seat behind. The clear width shall be increased as follows:
  - a. For rows of seating served by aisles or doorways at both ends, there shall be no more than 100 seats per row. A minimum clear width of 12 inches between rows shall be increased by 0.03 inch for every additional seat beyond 14, but the minimum clear width need not exceed 22 inches.
  - b. For rows of seating served by an aisle or a doorway at one end only, the minimum clear width of 12 inches between rows shall be increased by 0.06 inch for every additional seat beyond seven, but the minimum clear width need not exceed 22 inches. In addition, the distance to the point where the occupant has a choice of two directions of travel to an exit shall not exceed 30 feet from the point where the occupant is seated.
5. When there are more than 300 seats, loose seats, folding chairs, or similar seating facilities that are not fixed to the floor shall be bonded together in groups of three or more. Bonding of chairs is not required when tables are provided for dining or similar purposes.

## **K. SMOKING AND OPEN FLAMES**

Smoking shall **not** be permitted in any temporary membrane structure, tent or canopy, or in any adjacent areas where hay, straw, or any other combustible materials are stored or used unless approved by the Fire Marshal. Approved “NO SMOKING” signs shall be conspicuously posted.

## **L. FLAMMABLE OR COMBUSTIBLE LIQUIDS AND LIQUIFIED PETROLEUM GAS (LPG)**

1. Flammable-liquid-fuel equipment shall not be used in temporary membrane structures, tents, or canopies.

2. Flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored outside in an approved manner not less than 50 feet from temporary membrane structures, tents, or canopies. (CFC Section 3104.17.2)
3. LPG shall be located outside and in accordance with CFC Section 3104.16.2. Safety release valves shall be pointed away from temporary membrane structures, tents, or canopies.
4. Refueling shall be performed in an approved location not less than 20 feet from temporary membrane structures, tents, or canopies. (CFC Section 3104.17.3)

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### **M. HOUSEKEEPING**

1. Combustible vegetation shall be removed from the area occupied by a temporary membrane structure, tent, or canopy, and from areas within 30 feet of such a structure.
2. Hay, straw, trash, and similar combustible materials shall not be stored inside or within 30 feet of a temporary membrane structure, tent, or canopy being used for cooking or public assembly. (*Exception: Hay, straw, and similar combustibles treated with a flame retardant in an approved manner.*)

### **N. HEATING AND COOKING EQUIPMENT**

1. Cooking equipment is permitted only inside tents used exclusively for the cooking of food. No other uses such as public assembly, sales, displays, etc. are permitted. (*Exception: The warming of food, cooking demonstrations, or similar activities where the equipment and operations involved do not present an ignition hazard as approved by the Fire Marshal.*)
2. Cooking equipment used in cooking tents shall be vented to the outside air by approved means. Where vents or flues are used, all portions of the tent or canopy shall be no less than 12 inches from the flue or vent. Solid fuel burning equipment shall be equipped with a spark arrestor having opening not exceeding  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch wire mesh.
3. Tents where cooking is performed shall be separated from other temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies by a minimum of 20 feet.
4. Outdoor cooking that produce sparks or grease-laden vapors shall not be performed within 20 feet of a non-cooking temporary membrane structure, tent, or canopy. All other cooking equipment shall be located a minimum of 10 feet from temporary membrane structures, tents, and canopies.
5. Only comfort-type heating equipment is permitted. All fuel-fired comfort heating equipment shall be located on the exterior of the temporary membrane structure or tent a

minimum of 10 feet away. Heated air shall be ducted from the equipment to the temporary membrane structure or tent. Separate fuel supplies that are in use for comfort-heating equipment shall be located a minimum of 20 feet from the temporary membrane structure or tent. Stored fuel shall be located a minimum of 50 feet from the tent.

6. Heating and cooking equipment shall not be located within 10 feet of exits, exit pathways, tent or canopy fabric, or other combustible materials.
7. All cooking and heating equipment, tanks, piping, hoses, fittings, valves, tubing, and other related components shall be approved and in accordance with the Mechanical Code.

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### **O. PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS AND OTHER FIRE PROTECTION APPLIANCES**

1. Minimum fire extinguisher coverage shall be provided in every temporary membrane structure, tent, or canopy as follows:
  - a. 200 to 500 square feet of floor area: one 2A:10B:C extinguisher;
  - b. 501 to 1,000 square feet of floor area: two 2A:10B:C extinguisher;
  - c. Each additional 2,000 square feet of floor area or fraction thereof: one 2A:10B:C extinguisher.
2. Fire extinguishers shall be provided for each kitchen, mess hall, power generator, or transformer location where flammable or combustible liquids are used, and in other locations in accordance with Uniform Fire Code Standard 10-1.
3. At least one 40B:C type fire extinguisher shall be provided for each kitchen, mess hall, power generator, or transformer, and at locations where flammable or combustible liquids are used, stored, or dispensed.
4. Other fire appliances shall be maintained at the site as may be required by the Fire Marshal.