



**Alameda County Fire Department  
Bureau of Fire Prevention**

**INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN**

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**Fire Code Requirements for Tents and Canopies**

This Informational Bulletin has been developed by the Alameda County Fire Department to summarize the fire and life safety regulations relating to temporary structures classified as tents and canopies.

**Definitions:** **Tent** - A temporary structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported in any manner except by air or the contents it protects.

**Canopy** - A temporary structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except by air or the contents it protects without sidewalls or drops on 75% or more of the perimeter.

**Fire Code Regulations:**

1. A Fire Department permit is required to erect any tent over 200 square feet in floor area or any canopy over 400 square feet in floor area. In addition to a Fire Department permit, approval may also be required from the local planning agency. (2007 CFC 2403.2)
2. A tent may not be erected on any site for more than 180 days in any 12-month period. (2007 CFC 2403.5)
3. All tent fabric and interior decorative fabric used in tents or canopies is required to be flame retardant in accordance with appropriate State Fire Marshal standards. Any saw dust, shavings, straw or other combustible material used on the floor of such tents must also be made flame resistant. A Certificate of Flame Resistance or other documentation affirming compliance with this requirement must be submitted with any application for a permit to erect a tent. (2007 CFC 2404.2)

**Location Requirements:**

1. Tents and canopies must be separated from each other, property lines, other structures and Vehicles, by a minimum clear width of 20 feet or by the required exit width, which ever is greater. For purposes of required distances, support ropes and guy wires are considered part of the tent. (2007 CFC 2403.8.2)
2. Fire apparatus roadways shall be 20 feet wide with 13'-6" vertical clearance capable of supporting the imposed load of fire apparatus. (2007 CFC 503.2.1)

**Exiting Requirements:**

Exits from tents and canopies shall comply with the following table. (2007 CFC 2403.12.2)

**OVER**

**CFC TABLE 2403.12.2**

OCCUPANT LOAD	MINIMUM EXITS	MINIMUM WIDTH OF EACH MEANS OF EGRESS (INCHES)
10 TO 199	2	72
200 TO 499	3	72
500 TO 999	4	96
1,000 TO 1,999	5	120
2,000 TO 2,999	6	120
OVER 3000	7	120

1. Tents or canopies having an occupant load of 50 or more must be provided with exit signs and exit directional signs (2007 CFC 2403.12.6). If the occupant load is more than 100, the exit signs must be internally illuminated or of an approved self-luminous type. Internally illuminated signs must be supplied with power from two separate circuits, one of which shall serve no other purpose. If the occupant load exceeds 300, the exit signs shall be provided with an approved emergency power system such as back-up batteries or an automatic emergency generator. (2007 CFC 2403.12.6.1)
2. Aisles with a minimum width of 44 inches shall be provided for access to all exits. All portions of the interior of the tent or canopy shall be within 30 feet of an aisle. (2007 CFC 2403.12.5) A scale drawing showing the proposed arrangement of furniture and fixtures inside the tent or canopy shall be submitted to the Fire Department for approval as part of the permit process. (2007 CFC 2403.12.5.1)

**House Keeping and General Fire Safety Requirements:**

1. Flammable and combustible liquids and LP-gas shall not be stored in or within 50 feet of tents and canopies. (2007 CFC 2404.17.2 & 2404.16)
2. All weeds, combustible vegetation, trash and combustible storage shall be removed from areas adjacent to and within 30 feet of tents and canopies. Floor surfaces inside and within 30 feet of canopies shall be kept free and clear of combustible waste. (2007 CFC 2404.21)
3. Gas, solid or liquid-fuel-burning equipment shall be vented to the exterior by means of an approved flue or vent. A 12-inch clearance shall be maintained between the flue or vent and all tent material. Solid-fuel-burning equipment shall be provided with an approved spark arrestor having openings not exceeding ¼ inch wire mesh. (2007 CFC 2404.15.2)
4. Fire extinguishers with a minimum rating of 2A-10BC shall be provided as follows: one extinguisher for tents and canopies up to 500 square feet in floor area; two extinguishers for 501 to 1,000 square feet; and one extinguisher for each additional 2,000 square feet of floor area or fraction thereof. (2007 CFC 906.3)
5. Smoking is prohibited in tents and canopies. Approved NO SMOKING signs shall be posted. The use of open flame devices such as candles is prohibited in tents and canopies. (2007 CFC 2404.6 & 2404.7)
6. The Fire Department strictly regulates cooking and heating equipment. Contact the Fire Prevention Division for your area for requirements. (2007 CFC 2404.15)

*If you have any questions or wish to apply for a permit to erect a tent or canopy, please contact the Fire Prevention Division for your area.*

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