



Modesto Fire Department
FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION
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TENT GUIDELINES

These guidelines are a summary of some of the regulations found in the 2016 California Fire Code, 2016 California Building Code, and Modesto Municipal Code. They are not a complete reiteration of those Codes. All requirements of the California Fire Code, California Building Code, Modesto Municipal Code, and other pertinent Codes, regulations, and policies shall be complied with.

Tent Permits

1. A tent shall not be erected unless a *Tent Permit* application (if applicable) has been approved by the Modesto Fire Department (MFD). Note: Canopies are considered to be tents. They are considered to be tents that are open on all sides. References to tents herein include canopies. These guidelines govern the use of tents in or under which 10 or more people may gather. (See 2016 CFC 3101.1 for several exceptions.)
2. A MFD *Tent Permit* is required for any of the following—
 - a) Each individual tent (with one or more sidewalls or drops) greater than four hundred (400) square feet. (2016 CFC 3103.2)
 - b) Each individual tent (open on all sides) greater than seven hundred (700) square feet. (2016 CFC 3103.2)
 - c) Multiple individual tents (open on all sides) placed near to each other with an aggregate floor area greater than seven hundred (700) square feet. (A twelve foot wide or wider fire break may be used to break up the size of an aggregate tent area to stay under seven hundred square feet. There shall be no combustible material placed or located in the fire break area.) Each such aggregate area shall be separated from structures and other tents by a twelve foot or wider fire break. (2016 CFC 3103.2)
3. The *Tent Permit* application fee shall be paid at the time of permit submittal.
4. The *Tent Permit* application shall be received by the Fire Prevention Division at least fourteen (14) calendar days before the expected erection date of the tent.
5. On the *Tent Permit* application, briefly describe what people will be doing in the tent (e.g. viewing exhibits, dining, dancing, lecture, etc.). State the size of the largest crowd you expect inside the tent at any given time.
6. Include a site diagram drawn to scale showing all dimensions. Include all lot lines, streets, alleys, buildings, fire fighting equipment (such as fire sprinkler risers, fire hydrants, FDC's, and PIV's), and other fixed objects.
7. Show all aisles, doors, tables, chairs, displays, cooking appliances, exhibit areas, dance areas, and large decorations inside the tent.

8. A representative from the company or person erecting the tent shall be present at time of tent inspection.

Fire Apparatus Access Roads

1. A fire engine access roadway shall be established around and/or through all tent areas. It shall be a minimum of twenty (20) feet wide and thirteen and one-half (13½) feet high. Support ropes and guy wires supporting the tent shall not intrude into this area. It shall be maintained clear of all materials, storage, and obstructions. More than one access road may be needed. (2016 CFC 3103.8.1; 2016 CFC 503.2.1)
2. No aspect of a tent shall be greater than one hundred fifty (150) feet from an access roadway. (2016 CFC 3103.8.1; 2016 CFC 503.1.1)

Tent Distances (general requirements)

1. Each tent shall be spaced at least twenty (20) feet from lot lines, buildings, parked vehicles, and internal combustion engines. (Twenty feet is measured from extended support ropes and guy wires.) However, a tent need not be separated from buildings when all of the following conditions are met (2016 CFC 3103.8.2):
 - a) The aggregate floor area of the tents does not exceed ten thousand (10,000) square feet.
 - b) The aggregate floor area of the building and tents does not exceed the allowable floor area including increases as indicated in the California Building Code.
 - c) Required means of egress provisions are provided for both the building and the tents including travel distances.
 - d) Fire apparatus access roads are provided in accordance with CFC Section 503.
2. Each tent shall be spaced at least twenty (20) feet from other tents. (Twenty feet is measured between extended support ropes and guy wires.) However, a tent need not be separated from other tents if none of the tents is used for cooking and the aggregate floor area does not exceed fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet. (2016 CFC 3103.8.2) A group of tents not separated by twenty (20) feet is considered to be a single tent having the aggregate square footage.
3. Fire protection equipment on buildings and on site (sprinkler risers, fire hydrants, FDC's, PIV's, etc.) shall not be blocked or obstructed by a tent. (2016 CFC 509.2)

Tent Exiting

1. Exit openings from tents shall remain open unless covered by a flame-resistant curtain. Exit curtains shall be free sliding on a metal support. The metal support shall be a minimum of eighty (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. Exit curtains shall be of a color or colors that contrast with the color of the tent. (2016 CFC 3103.12.3)
2. Exits shall be clearly marked. If the occupant load is fifty (50) or more people exit signs shall be installed at all required exit doorways and where otherwise necessary to indicate clearly the direction of egress. Exit signs shall be either listed and labeled in accordance with UL 924 as the internally illuminated type and used in accordance with the listing, or shall be externally illuminated by luminaires supplied by two separate circuits one of which shall be separated from all other circuits. Exit signs shall have a minimum duration of 90 minutes when operating under internal or external emergency power. If the occupant load is greater than three hundred (300) people an approved emergency power system is required in addition to other requirements. (2016 CFC 3103.12.6)

3. Exit path lighting. The means of egress pathway shall be illuminated with light having an intensity of not less than 1 foot-candle at floor level at all times while the tent is occupied. Exit path lighting shall have a minimum duration of 90 minutes when operating under internal or external emergency power. Fixtures required for the means of egress illumination shall be supplied from a separate circuit or source of power. 2016 CFC 3103.12.7)

Tent Material

1. Fabric Treatment. 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 their appurtenances; sidewalls, drops and tarpaulins; floor coverings, bunting and combustible decorative materials and effects, including sawdust where used on floors or passageways, are flame resistant in accordance with the provisions set forth in CCR, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 8. Tops and side-walls shall be made either from fabric which has been flame resistant treated with an approved exterior chemical process by an approved application concern, or from inherently flame resistant fabric approved and listed by the State Fire Marshal (see CCR, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 8). (2016 CFC 3104.2)
2. Label. Tents shall have a permanently affixed label bearing the identification of size and fabric or material type. (2016 CFC 3104.3)
3. Certification. An affidavit or affirmation shall be submitted to the fire code official and a copy retained on the premises on which the tent or air-supported tent is located. The affidavit shall attest to the following information relative to the flame propagation performance criteria of the fabric: (2016 CFC 3104.4)
 - a) Names and address of the owners of the tent or air-supported tent.
 - b) Date the fabric was last treated with flame-retardant solution.
 - c) Trade name or kind of chemical used in treatment.
 - d) Name of person or firm treating the material.
 - e) Name of testing agency and test standard by which the fabric was tested.

Food Vending

1. A MFD *Food Vendor Using Propane Permit* is required to use or store LPG (e.g. propane and butane) in a commercial setting for cooking purposes (whether inside or outside a tent). (This does not apply to self-propelled motor vehicles.) See *Food Vendor Using Propane Guidelines* for more information.
2. Food vendors at public events cooking with charcoal, wood, or electricity do not need a *Food Vendor Permit* from MFD. (However, other public agencies may have their own requirements.)

Cooking, Heating, and Warming Appliances

1. Cooking, heating, and lighting appliances shall not be used or placed contrary to any requirement of the California Fire Code or the manufacturer's directions.
2. Cooking and heating equipment shall not be located within ten (10) feet of an exit or combustible material. (2016 CFC 3104.15.3)
3. Hot ashes, cinders, smoldering coals, or greasy or oily materials subject to spontaneous ignition shall not be deposited in a combustible receptacle, within ten (10) feet of other combustible material including combustible walls and partitions, or within two (2) feet of openings to buildings. (2016 CFC 305.2)

4. Gas, liquid, and solid fuel-burning equipment designed to be vented shall be vented to the outside air as specified in the California Mechanical Code. Such vents shall be equipped with approved spark arresters where required. Where vents or flues are used, all portions of the tent or membrane structure shall be not less than twelve (12) inches from the flue or vent. (2016 CFC 3104.15.2)
5. Open flame devices; other devices emitting flame, fire, or heat; devices using flammable or combustible liquids, gas, or charcoal; other cooking devices; and, unapproved devices shall not be permitted inside or located within twenty (20) feet of any tent while open to the public unless approved by the Fire Code official in writing,. Operations such as warming of foods, cooking demonstrations, and similar operations that use solid flammables, butane, or other similar devices that do not pose an ignition hazard shall be approved. (2016 CFC 3104.7; 2016 CFC 3104.15.4)
6. Tents (with one or more sidewalls or drops) where indoor cooking is approved shall be separated from other tents by a minimum of twenty (20) feet. (2016 CFC 3104.15.5)
7. Outdoor cooking that produces sparks or grease-laden vapors shall not be performed within twenty (20) feet of a tent. (2016 CFC 3104.15.6)
8. Combustible material shall be kept an approved distance from all ignition sources (such as luminaires, heaters, and flame-producing devices). (2016 CFC 305.1) (See also the *Weeds and Other Combustible Materials* section below.)

Flammable and Combustible Liquid Permits

1. A MFD *Flammable and Combustible Liquids Permit* is required to use or store flammable or combustible liquids in a commercial event for cooking, lighting, heating, or other uses (whether inside or outside a tent).
2. Flammable-liquid-fueled equipment (such as gasoline, "white" gas, and methanol) shall not be used inside a tent. (2016 CFC 3104.17.1)
3. Combustible-liquid-fueled equipment (such as kerosene, diesel, and oil) may be used inside a tent with permission of the Fire Marshal.
4. Flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored outside in an approved manner at least fifty (50) feet away from tents. (2016 CFC 3104.17.2)

Generators and Internal Combustion Engines

1. Generators and other internal combustion power sources shall be separated from tents by a minimum of twenty (20) feet and shall be isolated from contact with the public by fencing, enclosure, or other approved means. (2016 CFC 3104.19)
2. Refueling shall be performed in an approved location not less than twenty (20) feet from tents. (2016 CFC 3104.17.3)

Fire Extinguishers

1. A minimum of one 2A10BC rated fire extinguisher or larger (such as 3A40BC) shall be provided for each tent. Additional extinguishers may be required based on use and square footage. (2016 CFC 3104.12; 2016 CFC Standard 10-1)
2. A fire extinguisher shall be accessible within seventy-five (75) feet of travel distance. (2016 CFC Standard 10-1)
3. A K-class rated wet chemical fire extinguisher shall be provided for deep-fat fryers. A K-class fire extinguisher shall be accessible within thirty (30) feet of travel distance. (2016 CFC 904.12.5)

4. Each fire extinguisher shall be serviced annually or after it has been used whichever occurs first. (There shall be a current State Fire Marshal maintenance tag attached to the extinguisher or a fire extinguisher sales receipt dated within the last twelve months or a label on the fire extinguisher indicating that the extinguisher was manufactured within the last twelve months.) (CCR, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 3)

Weeds and Other Combustible Materials

1. Flammable growth (e.g. dry weeds and dry branches) within 50 feet of any tent shall be removed. (CCR, Title 19, Division 1, 326a)
2. Combustible growth (e.g. green trees, plants, weeds, and shrubs) that could create a fire hazard shall be removed from the area occupied by a tent or membrane structure, and from areas within 30 feet of such structures if directed by the fire official. (2016 CFC 3104.21)
3. Hay, straw, shavings or similar combustible materials shall not be located within any tent or membrane structure containing an assembly occupancy, except for materials kept in a prudent fire safe manner necessary for the daily feeding and care of animals. (2016 CFC 3104.5)
4. Sawdust, shavings, or other combustible material used on the floor or ground shall be made flame resistant or when approved by the enforcing authority shall be kept adequately damp when tent is occupied. (CCR, Title 19, Division 1, 315b)
5. Hay, straw, trash and other similar flammable material that is stored shall be more than 50 feet from any tent except upon approval of the enforcing authority. (CCR, Title 19, Division 1, 326b)
6. 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 materials and other combustible materials that could create a fire hazard. Such waste shall be stored in approved containers and removed from the premises not less than once a day during the period the structure is occupied by the public. (2016 CFC 3104.22)
7. Spaces underneath grandstand and bleacher seats shall be kept free from combustible and flammable materials. Except where enclosed in not less than 1-hour fire-resistance-rated construction in accordance with the California Building Code, spaces underneath grandstand and bleacher seats shall not be occupied or utilized for purposes other than means of egress. (2016 CFC 304.1.3)
8. Smoking is not permitted in any tent and in any adjacent areas where hay or other highly flammable materials are kept. "No Smoking" signs shall be conspicuously posted in all tents open to the public and wherever otherwise specified by the enforcing authority. (2016 CFC 3104.6; CCR, Title 19, Division 1, 316)