



CITY OF MADISON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Prevention Division

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TENTS AND TEMPORARY MEMBRANE STRUCTURES

Compliance Guidelines

This list of guidelines does not include all requirements for the safe use of tents. This list of guidelines applies to all tents not just those requiring a license or notification. It is the license/permit holder's responsibility to comply with the applicable sections of the Madison General Ordinance, the International Fire Code and the Wisconsin Administrative Code.

1. **Flame-resistant treatment** required for all tents and membrane structures.
2. **Use period.** 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.
3. **Smoking shall not be permitted** in tents or membrane structures. Approved "No Smoking" signs shall be conspicuously posted.
4. **Fireworks shall not be used** within 100 feet of tents or membrane structures.
5. **No 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 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.
6. **Heating or cooking equipment**, tanks, piping, hoses, fittings, valves, tubing and other related components shall be installed as specified in the *International Mechanical Code* and the *International Fuel Gas Code*, and shall be approved by the fire code official.

Outdoor cooking that produces sparks or grease-laden vapors shall not be performed within 20 feet from a tent.

Operations such as warming of foods, cooking demonstrations and similar operations that use solid flammables, butane or other similar devices which do not pose an ignition hazard, shall be approved.

7. **Housekeeping.** All weeds and combustible vegetation shall be removed from the premises adjacent of or within 30 feet of any tent. Hay, straw, shavings, trash and other combustible material may not be stored less than 30 feet from any tent, except upon special permission from the fire chief.

The grounds both inside and outside of tents shall be kept free and clear of combustible waste. The waste shall be stored in approved containers or removed from the premises.

8. **Flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored outside** in an approved manner not less than 50 feet from tents or membrane structures. The storage and dispensing of flammable or combustible liquids shall be in accordance with COMM 10.

Flammable and combustible liquids shall not be used in tents or membrane structures.

9. **LP-gas containers shall be located outside.** Containers 500 gallons or less, shall have a minimum separation of 10 feet between container and tents or membrane structures.
10. **Gas cylinders** - Adequately secure all compressed gas cylinders.
11. **Electrical Installations.** Electrical systems in all tents that accommodate more than 50 persons shall be installed in accordance with the requirements of Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter Comm 16 Electrical. All such systems shall be maintained and operated in a safe and workmanlike manner.

The electrical system and equipment shall be isolated from the public by proper elevation and guarding. All electrical fuses and switches shall be installed in approved enclosures. Cables laid on the ground or in areas traversed by the public shall be placed in trenches or protected by approved covers.

12. Exits.

a. Distribution of exits.

- Exits shall be spaced at approximately equal intervals around the perimeter of the tent and shall be located such that all points are 100 feet (30 480 mm) or less from an exit.

b. Number of exits.

- Tents or usable portion thereof shall have at least one exit and not less than the number of exits required by Table 2403.12.2 The widths of means of egress required by Table 2403.12.2 shall be divided approximately equally among the separate means of egress. The total width of means of egress in inches (mm) shall not be less than the total occupant load served by a means of egress multiplied by 0.2 inches per person.
- Every tent occupied by the public shall have at least 2 standard exits located at or near opposite ends of the structure.
- Exits shall be uniformly distributed but in no case shall the line of travel to an exit be greater than 100 feet.

13. **Exit lights and signs.** All exits, aisles and passageways leading to exits in tents used as places of outdoor assembly shall be kept adequately lighted at all times when the structure is occupied by the public. Artificial illumination having an intensity of not less than 1-foot candles at the floor line shall be provided when natural light is inadequate.

Exit lights and signs complying with the requirements of IFC 2403.12.6 shall be provided in all tents used as places of outdoor assembly where more than 50 persons can be accommodated.

14. **Portable Fire extinguishers** with a minimum rating of 2A-10B:C shall be provided. The travel distance to extinguisher(s) shall not exceed 75 feet. Extinguishers shall be readily accessible and shall not be obstructed or obscured from view.

15. **An Unobstructed Fire Break** passageway or fire road not less than 12 feet wide and free from guy ropes or other obstructions shall be maintained on all sides of all tents unless otherwise approved by the code official.

16. **Fire Access Roads** shall extend to within 150 feet of all portions of the event site and shall have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet and an unobstructed vertical clearance of not less than 13 feet 6 inches.

17. **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.

18. **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 sq. ft.

2. Membrane structures and tents need not be separated from buildings when all of the following conditions are met:

- The aggregate floor area of the membrane structure and tent shall not exceed 10,000 square feet.
- The aggregate floor area of the building and membrane structure and tent shall not exceed the allowable floor area including increases as indicated in the *International Building Code*.
- Required means of egress provisions are provided for both the building and the membrane structure and tent, including travel distances.
- Fire apparatus access roads are provided in accordance with the IFC.

Membrane structures having an area of 15,000 sq. ft. or more shall be located not less than 50 feet from any other tent or structure as measured from the sidewall of the tent or membrane structure unless joined together by a corridor.

REFERENCES: Madison General Ordinance (MGO) 29.355 - Use of Tents for Merchandising and Display; Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter COMM 62; and 14, International Fire Code Chapter 24.

If you have any questions regarding the above requirements telephone the Fire Prevention Division at 266-4420.