



North Myrtle Beach Department of Public Safety
Fire Prevention Division
Tent Guidelines and Permitting Requirements



The guidelines established herein are based on provisions of the International Fire Code 2012 Edition. Any proposed alternative measures to the requirements below shall provide an equal level of safety, and shall require prior approval of the fire official.

Permits:

An operational permit is required of any air supported temporary membrane structure or tent in excess of 400 square feet.

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 not less than 12 feet shall not exceed 700 square feet total.
 - 2.3. A minimum clearance of 12 feet to structures and other tents shall be provided.
- 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, and combustible decorative materials meet 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.
 - Tents shall have a permanently affixed label bearing the identification of size and fabric or material type.

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 structure is located. The affidavit shall attest to the following information relative to the flame propagation performance criteria of the fabric:

1. Names and address of the owners of the tent or air supported structure.
2. Date the fabric was last treated with flame retardant solution.
3. Trade name or kind of chemical used in treatment.
4. Name of person or firm treating the material.
5. Name of testing agency and test standard by which the fabric was tested.

Access, Location and Parking:

- Fire apparatus access roads shall be a minimum of 20 feet, and roads shall not be obstructed in any manner, including the parking of vehicles.
- Tents shall not be located within 20 feet of lot lines, buildings, other tents or membrane structures, and internal combustion engines with the following exceptions:
 1. Separation distances between tents and membrane structures not used for cooking is not required when aggregate floor area of the tents do not exceed 15,000 square feet.
 2. Tents need not be separated from buildings when all of the following conditions are met:
 - a. The aggregate floor area of the tent or membrane structure shall not exceed 10,000 square feet;
 - b. The aggregate area of the tent and building shall not exceed the allowable floor area as indicated in the International Building Code.
 - c. Required exiting is maintained for both the tent and building, including travel distances.
 - d. Fire apparatus access roads are maintained.
- Tents with an area of 15,000 square feet or more shall not be located closer than 50 feet from any building or other tent, except with connecting corridors between multiple tents.
- Connecting corridors are allowed provided that an approved exit is located at each end of such corridor.
- A fire break or access of not less than 12 feet shall be maintained on all sides of tents, unless otherwise approved by the fire official.
- Tents shall be properly roped, braced and anchored to withstand the elements of weather and to guard against collapsing.
- Generators and other internal combustion power sources shall be separated from tents or membrane structures by a minimum of 20 feet.
- Generators shall be isolated from contact with the public by fencing, enclosure or other approved means.

Mean of Egress:

Means of egress from tents shall comply with the following:

- Exits shall be spaced at equal intervals as can be best accomplished.
- Any area of the tent shall be located within 100 feet of an exit.
- The required number and minimum width of exits shall be in accordance with the following:

1. Occupant load (OL) 10 to 199: Minimum 2 exits, minimum 72 inches per exit.
 2. OL 200 to 499: Minimum 3 exits, 72 inches per exit.
 3. OL 500 to 999: Minimum 4 exits, 96 inches per exit.
 4. OL 1,000 to 1,999: Minimum 5 exits, 120 inches per exit.
 5. OL 2,000 to 2,999: Minimum 6 exits, 120 inches per exit.
 6. Over 3,000: Minimum 7 exits, 120 inches per exit. Note: For over 3,000, minimum exits shall be based on total occupant load multiplied by 0.2 inches per person.
- Curtains over exit openings shall be of a color or colors that contrast the adjoining tent color, and curtains shall be on sliding metal supports, and located a minimum of 80 inches above the floor surface. Curtains may be taped along edges with colored tape to achieve the contrast requirements stated above, if approved by the fire official.
 - Exit doors, if required shall open in the direction of travel.
 - Proper aisle widths shall be maintained for theater style seating. Consult with your inspector for further.
 - Exit signs shall be clearly posted at each exit for tents serving an OL of 50 persons or more. Exit signs shall be either listed and labeled in accordance with UL 924 as the “internally illuminated” type, or externally illuminated in accordance with the following.
 1. For OL of 300 or less, two separate circuits, one of which is separate from all other circuits; or
 2. For OL of more than 300, two sources of power, one of which is an “emergency system” supplied by batteries or on site generators, for a minimum of 90 minutes duration.
 - Means of egress shall be illuminated at floor level during all times the tent is occupied. In most cases, the general lighting already available will satisfy this requirement.

Fire Protection Equipment:

- Portable dry chemical fire extinguishers with a minimum 2A- 10 BC rating shall be provided so that travel distance does not exceed 75 feet from any point to an extinguisher.
- Extinguisher shall have updated inspection tags (inspected annually), and shall be mounted on approved hangers.
- Cooking equipment involving solid fuels or vegetable or animal oils and fats shall be protected by a Class K rated portable extinguisher, located within a 30 foot travel distance of commercial type cooking equipment.
- All solid fuel cooking appliances whether or not under a hood, with fireboxes 5 cubic feet or less in volume shall have a minimum 2.5 gallon or two 1.5 gallon Class K wet chemical portable fire extinguishers.

Cooking and Heating:

- Heating or warming of food utilizing solid fuel burning materials (i.e. Sterno fuel cans) shall be approved provided such use is not within 10 feet of an exit or combustible materials.
- Cooking tents shall be separated from all other tents by a minimum of 20 feet.
- Heating of tents shall be accomplished by forced air, with the heating equipment located outside. LP gas containers for heating shall be located as follows:
 1. Containers with a capacity of 500 gallons or less shall be located a minimum of 10 feet from tent.
 2. Containers with a capacity of greater than 500 gallons shall be located a minimum of 25 feet from tent.
 3. All hoses for LP tanks shall be protected from physical damage, and LP gas tank valves shall be fully accessible and closed when not in use.

General:

- Generators and other internal combustion power sources shall be located a minimum of 20 feet from tents, and protected from public contact by fencing, barricades, etc.
- Combustible decorative material is strictly prohibited and floor service and area surrounding the exterior of the tent up to 30 feet shall be free of combustible material that may present a fire hazard.