

TENT AND CANOPY REGULATIONS

SCOPE: This document details the requirements for the operation of tents, canopies, and any other membrane-type structure.

1. Tents larger than 400 square feet require a permit. Tents that are open on all sides and are not larger than 700 sq ft are exempt if at least twelve (12) ft from other tents and buildings. Call 610-437-7758 for details. **See exception page for situations NOT REQUIRING A PERMIT.**
2. Any tent or canopy, **unless exempted as above**, occupied by more than **fifty (50) persons**, must have a detailed site, seating, egress, and heating plan submitted before a permit will be granted.
3. Clearances Required:
 - a. **Tents and all support lines** must be located at least **twenty (20) feet** from any building, lot line, vehicle parking, and any engine. If cooking operations are inside or within twenty (20) feet of the tents, then all tents and supports must be separated by twenty (20) feet also. Tents smaller than 10,000 square feet in area may be located closer to a building with Fire Marshal permission.
 - b. **Tents larger than 15,000 square feet** require an edge-to-edge clearance of fifty (50) feet, with the exception of an approved connecting corridor.
 - c. **A twelve (12) foot fire break** is required alongside tent walls unless authorized by the Fire Marshal.
4. Basic Tent Safety and Certification
 - a. The anchor system must be inspected before occupancy to ensure a secure tent.
 - b. The fabric must be inspected for tears and flaws. Damage is to be repaired immediately.
 - c. **The fabric must be fire-retardant and labeled as such.** Before the Permit is issued, provide the following: Owner of the tent; date the tent was last inspected by an approved technician; information on the fire-retardant (what type and what company applied same; the test standard by which the fabric was tested). Tents that are inherently flame-retardant must have documentation.

5. Egress Safety

a. Approved Exits are required

1-9 occupants	1 exit	44 inches wide
10-199 occupants	2 exits	72 inches wide each
200-499 occupants	3 exits	72 inches wide each
500-999 occupants	4 exits	96 inches wide each
1,000-1,999 occupants	5 exits	120 inches wide each

b. The distance from **any** occupied area inside to an approved exit must be 100 feet or less.

c. **Fire exit aisles must be at least 44 inches in width and be kept clear at all times. Clear exit paths must be available for all persons.** An aisle **must also** be minimum of one (1) foot per 50 persons. Thus a 400 person aisle must be eight (8) feet wide.

d. **Exit Door or required Opening Widths** shall remain open unless covered by an approved free-sliding flame-resistant curtain of contrasting color. It must open fully and safely. Any door installed in an egress shall swing outward.

6. Egress Lighting

a. **EXIT signs** are required for 50 occupants and above unless the tent is open on at least 50% of the perimeter. The signs must be internally illuminated with battery back-up or be externally lighted by two separate circuits (300 or less occupants) or by an approved emergency circuit if above 300 occupants.

b. A separate circuit is required for normal tent egress lighting.

c. Tents used after daylight must be equipped with approved emergency lighting. The Fire Marshal may require emergency lighting in any case.

7. Heating and Cooking Operations

a. Heating units must be located outside the tent. **Exception:** Approved electric heating or approved appliances vented to the outside. **Gas-fired or liquid-fueled portable heaters are not permitted inside of the tent.**

b. **Ten (10) foot** clearance required to propane tanks of 500 gal. or less.

c. **Twenty-five (25) foot** clearance for larger tanks.

d. **Cooking inside** or within twenty (20) feet of any tent to be permitted if in compliance with fire safety regulations as determined by the Fire Marshal. See those documents.

8. Storage, Inside Clearances, Special Restrictions
 - a. No combustible **storage** is permitted in a tent. **Exception:** animal feed in quantities for daily feed requirements. Damp sawdust is permitted.
 - b. **Storage** is not permitted under any seating areas.
 - c. **Lighting** shall be electric and not located within six (6) feet of any combustible construction, unless protected with approved insulation or guards.
 - d. A clearance of three (3) feet is required **between tent and contents** unless otherwise approved.
 - e. No **fireworks** use within 100 feet.
 - f. No **flammable or combustible liquid** within fifty (50) feet of a tent.
 - g. **No smoking inside.**
 - h. **Trash and vegetation** to be kept twenty (20) feet away from tent.
9. Fire extinguishers to be located inside. Minimum **4A** rating or two **2A** units available within a 75 foot travel distance. Any cooking device requires an approved **BC** extinguisher nearby. The extinguisher must be tagged as inspected by an approved technician, or be charged fully, as indicated by an approved attached gauge.
10. A building exit **cannot** be directly connected to a tent entrance or exit. The minimum required separation from any exit/entrance of the building to any exit/entrance of the tent is ten (10) feet. **Exception:** where approved by the Fire Marshal. An approved canopy may be used between the tent and the building if weather protection is desired.
11. Any open flame performance must be approved by the Fire Prevention Office.
12. Tents used for shows (e.g., circus or concert), and with an occupancy more than 100 persons, require approved firefighter attendance. **Exception:** shows with less than 500 persons in a tent with sufficient openings to allow unimpeded egress (such as tents with at least 50% of the perimeter unblocked by seating, stages or other impedances).

State Exceptions. The following operations will not require a permit per State Law:

- a. Tents and canopies that are erected for less than thirty (30) days and are less than 1,600 square feet in area, and are in use as part of a fair, festival, arts and crafts show, flea market, or other public celebration.

Examples of exempted occupancies are food tents at fairs, exhibition tents, and other event tents at events such as Mayfair, the Great Allentown Fair, and Sportsfest.

- b. Pole barns at agricultural fairs that are used for agricultural purposes and animal display do not require a permit.