

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF TENTS

I. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for the use and erection of tents on property owned by the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB).

II. BACKGROUND

The Maryland State Fire Prevention Code and the National Fire Code (NFPA 1) require a permit for the erection of temporary membrane structures and tents that have an area in excess of 200 ft². The International Building Code (IBC) has similar requirements. These guidelines are utilized to fulfill the permitting requirements of the applicable codes at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

III. GENERAL GUIDANCE

Tents with a covered floor area of 200 ft² or less can be erected at will and are not subject to the requirements of these guidelines.

At least 14 days prior to the planned erection of a tent, a requestor must complete and submit the Tent Request Form to FireMarshal@umaryland.edu. Written approval must be obtained from the UMB Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) before a tent can be erected.

The tent supplier must certify that the tent has been erected in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, industry standards, and all applicable code requirements.

All tent fabric must be flame resistant. If the tent is not marked with a flame resistant label, a certificate or other proof of flame resistance by a testing laboratory is acceptable as evidence of the required flame resistance.

Tents are only permitted on a temporary basis and may not be erected for greater than 180 days. Tents intended to be used for 180 days or greater are considered permanent structures and are subject to the full requirements of the applicable building codes.

A minimum of two dry chemical ABC fire extinguishers must be provided by the event organizer. The fire extinguishers must be kept in the tent, in secure and visible locations, and accessible to staff. All event organizers must be trained on proper fire extinguisher operation.

If the tent will be enclosed or have the ability to be enclosed on three or more sides, temporary exit signs must be provided above all required means of egress openings. The total number of required means of egress openings will be determined based on the information provided in the Tent Request Form. Exit signs are not required in tents with open sides.

Any and all electrical system installations must comply with the National Electrical Code. Electrical work must be performed by qualified individuals. When electrical cords, cables, extension cords, etc. are located in the means of egress, they must be placed in trenches or be protected by approved covers (yellow jacket cable protector, etc.).

Means of egress lighting and emergency lighting are required for all tents greater than 1,200 ft², with the only exception being tents that are open on all sides and that will be occupied only during daylight hours.

Portable heaters are permitted, however they must be listed, labeled, and designed specifically for tent use. Liquefied petroleum gases used for fuel-fired heaters must be located at least 10 ft away from the tent, must be secured in the upright position, and must be protected from vehicular and other potential damage.

Generators and other power sources must be located at least 15 ft away from all tents and must be enclosed by fencing or another approved means.

Trained crowd managers are required for all events with 50 or more occupants. Crowd managers must be provided at a minimum ratio of 1 crowd manager per every 250 occupants.

IV. RESTRICTIONS

The ground level enclosed by the tent and the surrounding ground level within 10 ft of the outside of the tent must be cleared of all flammable and combustible material and vegetation.

No hay, straw, shavings, or similar combustible materials are permitted within the tent unless they have been treated to make them flame retardant. A certificate or other proof of flame retardant by a testing laboratory indicating the materials have been properly treated must be submitted as evidence to the OFM.

Pyrotechnics are prohibited. Open flame devices will be approved on a case-by-case basis. Examples of open flames that are likely to be approved:

- For ceremonial or religious purposes, where the open flame is properly supported and kept away from combustibles.
- Where candles on tables are securely supported on substantial noncombustible bases and the candle flame is protected.
- Portable food warming equipment, when equipment is fueled by small heat sources that can be readily extinguished by water.

Only food warming may occur within the tent. Cooking equipment (grills, broilers, etc.) must be located at least 15 ft away from the tent.

Smoking within the tent is prohibited and may only occur in designated smoking areas, in accordance with UMB Public Safety Policy XI-1.00(a) – Non-Smoking Policy. If nearby property does not contain “No Smoking” signs, a sign stating NO SMOKING must be provided near the main tent entrance.

V. INSPECTIONS

The OFM may inspect any tent to ensure compliance with the State Fire Prevention Code, the National Fire Code, and these guidelines. Tents intended to be occupied for more than one day are required to be inspected in advance. All other tents may be inspected prior to or while in use. If any violations are found, they must be corrected immediately or occupancy of the tent may be restricted or prohibited.

Revised 03/2024