



**CITY OF DURHAM**

*Durham Fire Department*

2008 EAST CLUB BOULEVARD | DURHAM, NC 27704

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[www.DurhamNC.gov](http://www.DurhamNC.gov)



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## REQUIREMENTS FOR OBTAINING TENT PERMITS

**PURPOSE:** To provide a basis for the minimum requirements to obtain a permit for the use and erection of tents. The guidelines established herein are based on provisions of Chapter 24 of the 2012 North Carolina Fire Code.

### Permits:

The erection of any tent in excess of 400 square feet shall require prior approval and a permit issued by the City of Durham Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division. In addition, any tent with an occupant load of 50 or more persons shall require the submittal of a detailed site plan, indicating seating/table arrangements, location of any stage and other interior structures, and exit arrangements.

### Exceptions:

- Tents used exclusively for recreational camping purposes.
- Individual canopies/tents (opened on all sides) having an area no more than 700 square feet;
- Multiple canopies/tents (opened on all sides), placed side by side, with no 12-foot fire break, that do not exceed a total of 700 square feet;
- A minimum clearance of 12 feet to any structure or other tent.

### Access, Location and Parking:

- Fire apparatus access roads shall be a minimum of 20 feet wide, and roads shall not be obstructed in any manner, including the parking of vehicles.
- Fire equipment access roadways shall reach within 150 feet of all points around the perimeter of all tents or groups of tents that exceed 400 square feet (or 700 square feet when open on all sides).
- Tents shall not be located with-in 20 feet of lot lines, buildings, parked vehicles 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.

**Means 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 with-in 100 feet of an exit.
- Required number and minimum width of exits shall be in accordance with the following:
  1. Occupant load 10 to 199: Minimum 2 exits, minimum 72 inches per exit.
  2. Occupant load 200 to 499: Minimum 3 exits, 72 inches per exit.
  3. Occupant load 500 to 999: Minimum 4 exits, 96 inches per exit.
  4. Occupant load 1,000 to 1,999: Minimum 5 exits, 120 inches per exit.
  5. Occupant load 2,000 to 2,999: Minimum 6 exits, 120 inches per exit.

6. Occupant load 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, 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 fire inspector for further information.
- Exit signs shall be clearly posted at each exit for tents serving an occupant load 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 Occupant load of 300 or less, two separate circuits, one of which is separate from all other circuits; or
  2. For Occupant load 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-10BC rating shall be provided so that travel distance does not exceed 75 from any point to an extinguisher.
- Extinguishers shall have updated inspection tags (inspected annually), and shall be mounted on approved hangers. The hanging of extinguishers utilizing zip ties etc. is not acceptable.
- Certain use conditions (fireworks sales, etc.) may require pressurized water extinguishers in addition to the dry chemical type.

**Heating and Cooking:**

- Heating and cooking equipment shall be in accordance with Sections 2404-15-1 through 2404.15.7 of the NC Fire Code and approved by the fire code official.

- Cooking tents shall be separated from all other tents by a minimum of 20 feet.
- Outdoor cooking that produces sparks and grease-laden vapors shall not be within 20 feet of a tent.
- Heating equipment installation and venting shall be in accordance with the International Mechanical Code and the International Fuel Gas Code and shall be approved by the fire code official.

**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.
- Crowd managers shall be required at a ratio of 1 per 250 occupants.
- Standby fire watch may be required when, in the opinion of the fire official, it is essential for the public safety in a tent used as a place of assembly or other use where people congregate, because of the number of persons, or the nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest or activity.
- The Fire Marshal may revoke or suspend any permit as a result of any violations, weather conditions, proven complaints, or any unforeseen hazards that may arise.
- Permit fees are non-refundable.