



CITY OF DURHAM

Durham Fire Department
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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 31 of the 2018 North Carolina Fire Code.

Permits

The erection of any tent in excess of 1800 square feet shall require prior approval and a permit issued by the City of Durham Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division. In addition, any tent in excess of 800 square feet with sides shall require prior approval and a permit issued by the City of Durham Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division.

Exceptions:

- Tents used exclusively for recreational camping purposes
- Multiple canopies/tents (opened on all sides), placed side by side, with no 12-foot fire break, that do not exceed a total of 1800 square feet, but have a minimum clearance of 12 feet between any structure or other tent.

Access, Location and Parking

- Fire apparatus access roads shall be provided in accordance with Section 503.
- Fire equipment access roadways shall reach within 150 feet of all points around the perimeter of all tents or groups of tents that exceed 800 square feet or 1800 square feet when open on all sides.
 1. Tents shall not be located within 20 feet of lot lines, buildings, parked vehicles, other tents or membrane structures, or internal combustion engines with the following exceptions:
 - a. Separation distances between tents and membrane structures **NOT** used for cooking are not required when aggregate floor area of the tents do not exceed 15,000 square feet

- b. Tents or membrane structures need not be separated from buildings when **ALL** of the following conditions are met:
1. The aggregate floor area of the tent or membrane structure does not exceed 10,000 square feet
 2. The aggregate area of the tent or membrane structure **AND** building do not exceed the allowable floor area as indicated in the International Building Code
 3. Required means of egress are provided for both the building and the tent or Membrane structure, including travel distances
 4. Fire apparatus access roads are provided in accordance with Section 503.
- Tents or membrane structures with an area of 15,000 square feet or more shall not be located closer than 50 feet from any building or other tent as measured from the sidewall, except when joined together by corridor.
 - Tents or membrane structures are allowed to be joined together by means of corridors. Exit doors shall be located at each end of such corridors. Openings of at least 10 feet wide will be provided on each side of such corridor and will be located opposite each other.
 - 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 and membrane structures unless otherwise approved by the Fire Code Official.
 - Tents or membrane structures and their appurtenances shall be adequately roped, braced, and anchored to withstand the elements of weather and prevent against collapsing. Documentation of structural stability shall be furnished to the Fire Code Official upon request.

Means of Egress

Means of egress from tents shall comply with the following:

- Exits shall be spaced at equal intervals around the perimeter of the tent or membrane structure and shall be located so that all points are 100 feet or less from an exit.
- Required number and minimum width of exits shall be in accordance with the following:
 - a. Occupant load 10 to 199: Minimum 2 exits, minimum 72 inches per exit
 - b. Occupant load 200 to 499: Minimum 3 exits, minimum 72 inches per exit
 - c. Occupant load 500 to 999: Minimum 4 exits, minimum 96 inches per exit
 - d. Occupant load 1,000 to 1,999: Minimum 5-7 exits, minimum 120 and 96 inches per exit respectively
 - e. Occupant load 2,000 to 2,999: Minimum 6-8 exits, minimum 120 and 96 inches per exit respectively

- f. Occupant load over 3,000: Minimum 7-9 exits, minimum 120 and 96 inches per exit respectively.
- Curtains over exit openings shall be a color or colors that contrast with 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. The curtains shall be arranged so that, when open, no part of the curtain obstructs the exit.
- Exit doors, if required, shall open in the direction of travel.
- Proper aisle widths shall be maintained for theater-style seating. Further information may be obtained by consulting the assigned fire official or by referencing the 2018 NCFC Section 3103.12.5.
- Exit signs shall be clearly posted at each exit for tents serving an occupant load of 50 persons or more. Exit signs shall be one of the following:
 1. Internally illuminated in accordance with UL924
 2. 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
 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 and installed in accordance with NFPA 70.
- 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 feet from any point to an extinguisher and in accordance with 2018 NCFC Section 906.
- 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 3104.15.1 through 3104.15.7 of the 2018 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 public safety in a tent used as a place of assembly or when used 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.