



Northville Township Fire Department

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Tent Guidelines

Referenced Standards

- 2021 International Fire Code (IFC) as adopted by Chapter 79-2: IFC Chapter 31
- 2015 Michigan Building Code

Commentary

The following tent guidelines were reviewed for compliance with the IFC 2021 edition, Township ordinances and current fire department standards. The intent is to provide for the safety and welfare of those operating in and around temporary tents or membrane structures (domes, bounce houses, etc.). This document applies to **tents set up for temporary periods (less than 180 days)** such as those for special events, however, tents erected for more than 30 days shall have additional requirements (3103.7) and a separate review.

Compliance Permit Required

Per Township Ordinance 170-42.1 (E)(6), tents greater than 200 sq. ft., when utilized for nonresidential purposes will require a compliance permit. While not a full building permit, this compliance permit must include the use of the tent, location of the tent in relation to buildings/structures, fire lanes and emergency access. A field inspection is not required for tents that do not meet the below requirements of the Permit Required section.

Permit Required

Tents exceeding 400 sq. ft. must be permitted and approved prior to occupancy, unless the following conditions are met (3103.2.):

- It is open on all sides and:
 - Less than 700 sq. ft. and
 - Less than 700 sq. ft. total between combined tents placed side by side without a fire break clearance of 12 ft. (clearance measured from the end of the guy wires) and
 - At least 12 ft. from all structures and other tents

Standards

- Access.** Emergency vehicles must be able to access this area at all times. The access, location and parking for temporary tents must be evaluated to allow for emergency access (3103.8, 3103.8.1).
- Location.** If tents or membrane structures are located within 20 feet of lot lines, buildings or other tents, see section 3103.8.2 for additional requirements (3103.8.2).
- Flame performance criteria.** NFPA 701 Certificate must be submitted for review. The owner or designee (tent company/installer) must submit certification by an approved testing laboratory that the tent and all of its components meet NFPA 701 (3104.2).
- Labeling.** Tents must have a permanent label on the tent identifying the size and fabric type (3104.3).
- Open flame.** Open flame or other devices that produce a flame, fire or heat or any flammable or combustible liquids, gas, charcoal, etc. shall not be permitted inside or within 20 feet of the tent unless approved by the FCO (3104.7).
- Combustible materials.** Hay, straw or similar combustibles shall not be located in any tent (3104.5).
- Clearance.** All contents inside the tent must be at least 3 feet from the fabric envelope (3104.11).

- Fire extinguishers.** Portable fire extinguishers must be readily available for incipient firefighting as an additional safeguard against fire (3104.12).
- No smoking signs.** No smoking signs are required and must be posted. See section 310 (3104.6).
- Generators.**
 - Generators must be located a minimum of 20 feet from the tent or membrane structure and shall be isolated from the public by an approved means (fencing, enclosure, etc.).
 - Generators must be permitted and inspected by the electrical inspector.
- Exits.**
 - Exits shall be spaced at equal intervals and all points must be within 100 ft. of an exit (3103.12.1).
 - Tents must have at least one exit and not less than the number required in Table 3103.12.2 based on the occupant load. Door width is factored at 0.2/occupant. Over 10 occupants requires a minimum width of 72" each and at least 2 exits (3103.12.2).
- Aisle width.** Aisles must be at least 44" from seating areas (3103.12.5).
- Structural integrity**
 - Tents must be adequately roped, braced and anchored to withstand the elements of weather and to prevent collapse. Documentation of structural stability may be required (3103.9).
 - Inspection reports may be requested consisting of maintenance, anchor and fabric inspections (3103.7.1).
- Fireworks.** Fireworks cannot be used within 100 feet of any tent (3104.8). Fireworks require prior approval.
- Cooking.**
 - Cooking operations must be reviewed by the FCO and meet section 3104.15. Cooking is not permitted in any assembly tent and must have a specific tent dedicated to cooking.
 - Warming foods that use solid flammables, butane, etc. (sterno) may be approved (3104.15.4).
 - Cooking tents must be separated from other tents by a minimum of 20 ft. (3104.15.5).
 - Outdoor cooking must be at least 20 feet from a tent (3104.15.6).
 - Food trucks must comply with the **Food Truck Fire and Safety Requirements**.
- LP gas.** LP gas must comply with 3104.16.1 through 3104.16.3).
 - LP gas containers must be located outside.
 - Containers less than 500 gallons shall be separated at least 10 feet, over 500 gallons must be separated by not less than 25 feet.
 - Containers must be protected to prevent tampering, damage by vehicles, located in an approved location and must be securely fastened in place.
- Standby personnel.**
 - When required, the owner or designee must provide one or more qualified persons to remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public or during specific activities. See Fire Watch Guidelines for additional information (3104.20).
- Tents with over 50 occupants** (Places of Assembly 3103.3). Further review for those over 300 occupants.
 - Detailed site and floor plans, including the occupant load, are required for any tent application with an occupancy of 50 or more. The plan must include egress paths, aisle width, arrangement and capacity of seating, location and type of heating, location and type of generator, etc. (3103.6).
 - Seating arrangements must comply with Chapter 10 (3103.11).
 - Exit signs. Exit signs must be clearly marked and installed. Exit signs must either be internally illuminated in accordance with UL 931 or be externally illuminated (3103.12.6, 3103.12.6.1).
- Weather**
 - The applicant is responsible for providing for the safety of the attendees, guests or occupants of any special event. Plans for evacuation and sheltering during inclement weather are the

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responsibly of the event applicant. If the department determines that inclement weather may put attendees in danger or create a hazardous condition, the department reserves the right to cancel the event.

If you have any questions, please contact us at (318) 348-5807 or via email at thughes@twp.northville.mi.us.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Hughes Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Thomas M. Hughes, Jr.
Fire Marshal