

Tent & Canopy Safety Guidelines

Introduction

This document is intended for use as a general guideline. Please engage with the local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for permitting and any additional requirements. Always consult manufacturer guidelines for specific tent requirements and usage.

Tent Selection Use & Placement

Consideration of which type and size of tent or canopy should be determined by:

- intended purpose
- intended duration of use
- expected weather conditions
- location topography
- number of expected occupants in the tent or canopy

Anchoring

Ensure canopies or tents are properly secured. Ropes, wires, and weights used in anchoring a tent, must be in accordance with manufacturer guidelines. The department head or individual in charge of erecting the tent should refer to the manufacturer to determine appropriate anchoring and acceptability if using weights other than those provided by that manufacturer. Ropes and wires should only cross exits at a height of 7 feet or greater.

Open Flame and Cooking

Any cooking or open flame within tents is subject to the local fire code and the requirements of the AHJ. When using approved open flames, the tents, canopies, or membrane structures must be certified as flame retardant. The certification will often be sewn into the fabric of the structure. If a certification cannot be found, contact the manufacturer or supplier to confirm it is compliant. A minimum of one fire extinguisher (2A-10BC minimum rating) is required when tents and canopies have open flames, such as catering tents. Additional or different extinguishers may be required by the AHJ.

If heating and/or cooking is approved by the AHJ, propane tanks/cylinders must be kept outside the tent or canopy and properly secured to prevent damage and tipping. Ensure storage of flammable or combustible liquids are not within 50 feet and flammable gases are not stored within 25 feet of open flames.

Heaters

If the use of propane-fired heaters in or near a tent is allowed by the AHJ:

- Never close the tent flaps due to the potential for carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Adequate ventilation is required.
- A minimum of two openings directly to the outdoors must be provided (one high and one low) on opposite sides of the area to be heated. Each opening must be at least 3 inches for every 1000 btu.
- Different sized heaters will have different requirements, so it is critical to review and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Many products used by hair, makeup, and catering are highly flammable. Direct-fired propane heaters or heaters with open electrical elements should not be used where flammable aerosols, combustible gas, or airborne particulate (e.g., paint or glues) is present due to the risk of combustion.

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Severe Weather

Most tents and canopies are temporary structures that are not designed to withstand severe weather conditions or provide protection during emergency evacuation situations. Most tents are not designed to protect occupants during extreme conditions such as: storm systems, lightning, moderate to severe windstorms, heavy rains/snow, and emergency situations or conditions that raise any doubt to the structural integrity of the tent or canopy. All tents and canopies should be taken down when the wind speed exceeds wind speed recommended by the manufacturer.

Additional Guidelines

- Exits shall be clearly marked with illuminated exit signage and clearly indicate the direction of travel.
- Tents with a capacity of greater than 10 occupants, a minimum of two (2) means of egress (i.e., curtains, doors, etc.) is required, spaced at approximately equal intervals around the perimeter of the tent. Exit openings must allow for easy egress and remain unobstructed. Greater occupancy may require additional exits, check manufacturer guidelines and the local AHJ/permitting office for more information.
- The occupancy load is calculated by dividing the total square footage of the tent by the appropriate square footage per person. The permitting agency will often need to determine the occupancy load for the tent and an occupancy load sign may need to be posted inside the tent.
- If tents are equipped with exit doors, they must swing in the direction of exit travel.
- Smoking and vaping are PROHIBITED inside any tent or canopy.

Resources

Disney Production Safety's [Electrical Safety Guidelines](#) for additional information for wet or hazardous environments.

United States:

Industry-Wide Labor Management Safety Committee (CSATF) - [Safety Bulletins](#)

[09 - Recommended Guidelines for Working in and Around Base Camps](#)

[09A - Addendum "A" - Base Camp Inspection Checklist](#)

[13 - Recommended Guidelines When Using Combustible & Flammable Fuels and Associated Equipment](#)

[19 - Recommended Guidelines for The Use of Open Flame on Production](#)

[38 - Guidelines for Inclement or Severe Weather](#)

Canada:

ActSafe Safety Association- [Safety Bulletins](#)

[11- Propane Guidelines](#)

[13- Use & Set-Up of Large Tents](#)

[19- Open Flames on Motion Picture Sets](#)

Please contact your Production Safety Representative for further guidance.

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