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## General Requirements for Special Event Permitting

### Purpose:

This guideline has been developed to familiarize event promoters, sponsors, organizers, vendors and other agencies with information regarding special event procedures and general fire safety regulations that are enforced by the Tuscaloosa Fire & Rescue, Fire Marshal's Office.

### Scope:

The Tuscaloosa Fire & Rescue defines a special event as an event that occurs at a building, facility, park, or other location that is different than the intended use. Regulated items include, but are not limited to the following: fire lanes and public safety access, tents and temporary membrane structures, fireworks, pyrotechnics, open flames, occupant loads, exiting, egress, use of decorative materials and finishes, use and storage of fuel type equipment and crowd management.

### Guideline:

Prior to fire department review, special event applications shall be submitted directly to the appropriate city department. The city will coordinate the review of the application by all appropriate agencies, including the fire department. This does not take the place of an on sight field inspection by the Fire Marshal's Office. At that time, other requirements may be necessary in order to comply with fire and life safety issues.

### Definitions

1. **Fire Code Official**- The Fire Chief or other designated authority charged with the administration and enforcement of the code or a duly authorized representative. (**The Fire Marshal is the designated authority in Tuscaloosa**)
2. **Membrane Structure**- An air inflated air-supported, cable or frame-covered structure as defined by the International Building Code (IBC) and not otherwise defined as a tent. See Chapter 31 of the International Building Code.
3. **Noncombustible Material** – A material that, in the form in which it is used and under the conditions anticipated will not ignite, burn, support combustion, or release flammable vapors when subjected to fire or heat.
4. **Temporary** – Any structure not meant for use for more than 180 days within a 12 month period on a single premises.
5. **Temporary Stage Canopy** – A temporary ground supported membrane-covered frame structure used to cover stage areas and support equipment in the production of outdoor entertainment events.
6. **Tent** – A structure, enclosure or shelter, with or without sidewalls or drops, constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except by air or the contents that it protects.

7. **Canopy** – A structure or architectural projection of rigid construction over which a covering is attached that provides weather protection, identity or decoration, and may be structurally independent or supported by attachment to a building on one end and by not less than one stanchion on the outer end.

## Permitting Requirements

1. **Public Safety Plan:** Where the fire code official determines that an indoor or outdoor gathering of persons has an adverse impact on public safety through diminished access to buildings, structures, fire hydrants and fire apparatus access roads or where such gatherings adversely affect public safety services of any kind, the fire code official shall have the authority to order the development of, or prescribe a plan for, the provision of an approved level of public safety.

The public safety plan shall address such items as emergency vehicle ingress and egress, fire protection, emergency medical services, public assembly areas and the directing of attendees and vehicles (including the parking of vehicles), vendor and food concession distribution, and the need for the presence of law enforcement, and fire and emergency medical services personnel at the event.

2. **Emergency Vehicle Access:** During events it is exclusively imperative to keep access for fire and emergency apparatus. This would include access for both fire engines/trucks and medical transport units. To ensure a safe event, all required emergency access shall be maintained open and unobstructed at all times. A clear emergency vehicle access road, not less than 20 FT in width, shall be provided and maintained for the duration of the event. The emergency vehicles access road shall be unobstructed by guest and staff vehicles. Road barriers shall be movable by one person without special knowledge or extraordinary effort.
3. **Fire Protection Equipment and Systems:** Fire extinguishers and fire protection components shall be maintained operational and accessible at all times. The extinguishers must be “in date” with a current inspection tag, (not in need of servicing), visible, accessible and mounted. Extinguishers shall be provided and placed in all areas not to exceed 75 FT of travel. Minimum extinguisher rating 2A:10BC.
4. **Cooking:** Concession stands used for cooking shall have a 10 FT clearance on two sides and a serviced 2A:10BC rated fire extinguisher. Deep-fat fryers shall be provided with a serviced class K rated fire extinguisher. Portable barbecue grills shall be located at least 10 FT away from the public, concession stands, buildings and combustible storage areas. Barriers should be provided to separate the public from all cooking operations.
5. **Generators:** Generators must be located so that exhaust does not enter buildings, mobile trailers or tents. Generators and other internal combustion power sources shall be separated from tents or membrane structures and shall be placed only in locations approved for event use. All extension cords shall be approved for exterior use and shall not pose a tripping hazard. Refueling shall be performed in an approved location not less than 20 FT from tents and membrane structures.
6. **Crowd Managers:** Where, in the opinion of the fire code official, it is essential for public safety in a tent or membrane structure used as a place of assembly or any other use where people congregate, because of the number of persons, or the nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest or activity, the owner, agent or lessee shall employ one or more qualified persons, as required and

approved, to remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public, or when such activity is being conducted. Trained crowd managers shall be provided for indoor and outdoor events where more than **1000** persons congregate at the same time. A ratio of one crowd manager for each 250 persons is required, unless otherwise approved. Crowd managers may be assigned law enforcement personnel or staff members. Crowd manager information and training is available online at <https://www.iccsafe.org/about/periodicals-and-newsroom/icc-crowd-manager-training-program-updated/>

7. **Safety Personnel:** A dedicated Fire Watch and/or Fire Marshal shall be required when it is essential for public safety due to the nature of the event, activities, and the number of persons attending. The Fire Marshal will provide the applicant notification when safety personnel are required.
8. **Electrical:** Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be a substitute for **permanent** wiring. Extension cords and flexible cords shall not be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings or floors, or under doors or floor coverings, nor shall such cords be subject to environmental damage or physical impact. Extension cords shall be used only with portable appliances. Extension cords and electrical wiring shall be properly secured to the ground to prevent trip hazards. The ampacity of the extension cords shall not be less than the rated capacity of the portable appliance supplied by the cord. Extension cords shall be maintained in good condition without splices, deterioration or damage.
9. **Tents and Canopies:** *Tents and membrane structures* having an area in excess of 400 square feet (37 m<sup>2</sup>) and *canopies* over 700 square feet shall not be erected, operated or maintained for any purpose without first obtaining a permit and approval from the *fire code official*. A total square footage shall be calculated for multiple *tents* and *canopies* without a minimum of a 12 FT separation.

**Anchorage-** *Tents, 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 on request. A minimum weight of **50 pounds** shall be applied to each corner for small event *tents* (10 x10). Larger tents shall be secured and staked as approved by the *fire code official*.

**(Note:** In the event of inclement weather or excessive wind conditions, regardless of the weight anchorage you may be instructed to take down your tent.)

**(Note:** Merchandise that's intended for sale or distribution **shall not** be used as anchoring for tents such as clothing or coolers.)

**Smoking-** shall not be permitted in tents or membrane structures. Approved "No Smoking" signs shall be conspicuously posted.

**Flammable/Combustible Liquid Storage-** flammable and combustible liquids shall be stored outside in an approved manner not less than 50 FT from tents or membrane structures. Flammable liquid fueled equipment **shall not be used** in tents, canopies or membrane structures.

10. **Propane-** LP-gas containers shall be located outside. Safety release valves shall be pointed away from the tent, canopy or membrane structure. Portable LP-gas containers, piping, valves and fittings which are located outside and are being used to fuel equipment inside a *tent, canopy or membrane structure* shall be adequately protected to prevent tampering, damage by vehicles or other hazards and shall be located in an approved location. Portable LP-gas containers shall be securely fastened in place to prevent unauthorized movement. Hose assembly shall be maintained in good condition

without deterioration or damage. **Any cylinders that have not been requalified after 12 years of manufacture date will be taken out of service and prohibited from use.**

11. **Open Flame:** Open flame or other devices emitting flame, fire or heat or any flammable or combustible liquids, gas, charcoal or other cooking device or any other unapproved devices shall not be permitted inside or located within 20 FT of the *tent or membrane structures* while open to the public unless approved by the *fire code official*.
12. **Fireworks Permit:** The use and display of fireworks, including proximate audience displays and pyrotechnic special effects shall be prohibited unless handled by an approved, competent, Alabama Licensed Pyrotechnical Operator. The responsibility for obtaining the permit lies with the person, company, or organization who wishes to have the display or close proximate show. For permitting questions please contact the State Fire Marshal's Office at (334) 241-4166 or via the web at [www.firemarshal.alabama.gov](http://www.firemarshal.alabama.gov).