

2.13 Submittal Requirements for Temporary Tents and Membrane Structures (2022)

Reference: 2022 San Francisco Fire Code, Chapters 1, 10 & 31

Purpose: The purpose of this bulletin is to describe the necessary information that must be provided to the Fire Department to evaluate and issue a permit for a temporary tent or membrane structure, and what will be expected of the applicant as part of the permit process. The goal is to create a consistent, user-friendly document to assist the permit applicant in preparing submittal documents that may be readily approved.

Scope: This bulletin applies to temporary tents, air-supported, air-inflated or tensioned membrane structures as defined by the fire code having an area in excess of 400 sq. ft. that will be erected for a period not to exceed 180 days within a 12-month period on a single premise. Structures that will be erected in excess of 180 days are regulated by the California Building Code.

Exceptions:

- 1) Tents used exclusively for recreational camping purposes.
- 2) Tents open on all sides which comply with all of the following:
 - a) Individual tents having a maximum size of 700 sq. ft.
 - b) The aggregate area of multiple tents placed side by side without a fire break clearance of 12 feet, not exceeding 700 sq. ft. total
 - c) A minimum clearance of 12 ft. to all structures and other tents.

Permit Type: Under the San Francisco Fire Code, temporary tents and membrane structures that are subject to permits are required to have a combined construction/operational permit for installation and use. This permit must be obtained at: San Francisco Permit Center, Bureau of Fire Prevention, 49 South Van Ness 2nd floor, San Francisco, CA 94103 (<https://sf.gov/location/permit-center>). The permit application fee includes up to two (2) hours total of plan review and inspection time. Any additional time needed will be charged to the applicant at the regular hourly inspection rate.

Permit Application Submittal Timeline: Permit applications must be submitted at least five (5) business days prior to the requested start date of the activity or operation. The SFFD may elect to accept and review applications with a shorter timeline; however, such permits may be subject to overtime charges for review and approval.

Submittal Requirements: All applications for permits for temporary tents or membrane structures must be accompanied by two (2) copies of detailed site plans prepared on paper no less than 11" x 17" (larger if necessary, depending on the size of the site).

The plans shall contain all the following information:

- a. Indicate the type of structure (i.e., tent, membrane structure, tent w/o walls)
- b. Indicate the total size (sq/ft) of each structure and show dimensions of each side of the structure
- c. Provide address where structure will be located
- d. Indicate the desired duration of permit (from construction set-up until take-down) and the event date(s).
- e. Name of the company erecting tent or membrane structure

- f. Name of the organization sponsoring the event
- g. The proposed occupant load and use for each area (based upon CFC , Sec. 1004).
- h. Indicate the proximity (in feet) of the tent or membrane structure to the following: nearby buildings, property lines, other tents or membrane structures, parked vehicles or other combustion engines, adjacent building exits, fire hydrants, fire department connections, and paths to the public right of way (i.e.; sidewalks, streets, courtyards, etc)
- i. Show location and quantity of all water barrels, cement blocks, or other anchoring/ballasting devices.
- j. Provide a detail of anchoring or ballasting method (water barrels or cement blocks) and include the size, weight, material and the method for attaching the anchor/ballast to tent/membrane structure (size of ratchet tie downs).
- k. Show location of all ramps, stairs and handrails which shall comply with the California Building Code.
- l. Provide documentation of structural stability for anchor/ballast design submittal demonstrating that the anchoring or ballasting is appropriate.
 - a. Shall provide a minimum of 5-lbs per square foot of ballast. (Up to 14-lbs per square foot may be required as determined by SFFD due to site location, weather expected, and duration of permit.
 - b. Shall provide a minimum of 10-lbs per square foot of ballast on Port of San Francisco Property, Treasure Island, and Yerba Buena Island.
 - c. Minimum 2-inch straps with ratchet system is required. (Ropes are not permitted to be used as the attachment of tent frame to the ballasts.)
 - d. Water barrels shall be completely filled.
 - i. Exception: Concrete blocks shall be used on Port of San Francisco property.
- m. Show proposed furniture lay-out (tables, chairs, bleachers, grandstands, and stages) properly scaled with aisles and exit access. Aisles shall be in accordance with Section 1018 of the 2022 SFFC, and shall be a minimum of 44 inches (2022 SFFC, Sec. 3103.12.5). The dimension between tables, between tables and the adjacent walls and/or other obstructions shall be shown.
- n. Show all exits, type of opening (swinging door, slider, etc.) and indicate the clear exit width provided. (All points within the tent shall be 100 ft. or less from an exit and exiting shall comply with SFFC, Sec. 3103.12.1)
- o. Show the locations and sizes (lbs. or ABC size) of fire extinguishers that will be provided. (Travel distance to fire extinguishers shall not exceed 75 ft. Additional extinguishers are required at each cooking and warming area and at each fuel powered generator.)
- p. Show locations of all exit signs. Exit signs must be illuminated when serving occupant loads of more than 49 occupants. When occupant loads exceed 300, an approved emergency power system is required for exit sign illumination. All back-up sources of illumination shall have a minimum duration of 90 minutes (SFFC, Sec. 3103.12.6.1).
- q. Show locations of "NO SMOKING" signs and the maximum occupant load sign.
- r. All proposed activities inside tent/membrane structure areas shall be shown (i.e.; storage, assembly, food prep). Also include the distance, in feet, to cooking areas or cooking tents outside of the tent. The fuel source for each cooking appliance (charcoal, LP-gas, etc.) shall also be stated. Only food warming with sterno is permitted inside assembly tents.
- s. Show location of all heating equipment appliances and LP-gas containers near tent (LP-gas must be a minimum of 10 ft. from any tent/membrane structure). 2019 SFFC, Sections. 3107.12 and 3107.13.

Show locations of all generators and any flammable or combustible fuel storage onsite. Generators must be at least 20 ft. and stored flammable liquids shall be a minimum of 50 ft. from tents or membrane structures. (2019 SFFC, Sections 3107.14. & 3107.16)

Additional Fire Department permits may be required for generators and fuel storage, depending on amount of fuel stored.

Show all vehicles or equipment used for competition, demonstration, or display in tents and each shall comply with 2022 SFFC, Sec. 3107.15. Vehicle displays require an additional Fire Department permit.

Additional Documentation:

A Certificate of Flame Resistance for each tent, membrane structure, and all interior decorative fabrics or materials proposed shall accompany the application.

A copy of the Permit Holders General Liability Insurance naming as additional insured, the City and County of San Francisco, its officers, agents, and employees. (SFFD Administrative Bulletin 2.14)

When required by the Fire Code Official, applicants shall provide a Report of Installation Inspection prepared by a California licensed structural engineer after the installation is complete, but prior to occupancy.

Applicants proposing to install tents and /or membrane structures that meet any of the following three criteria shall provide a Report of Installation Inspection prepared by a California licensed structural engineer after the installation is complete, but prior to occupancy:

1. The square footage of the structure is 5000 sq. ft. or more
2. The approved occupant load is 500 or more
3. The clear span width of the structural support is 60 ft. or more

The report shall minimally state that in the engineer's professional opinion, the tent is designed, installed, and anchored to withstand expected forces and climate conditions including a minimum wind force of 80 mph. The report shall be signed and stamped with the engineer's professional seal.

Inspection: Prior to issuance of a permit, the Fire Department will inspect the installation for conformance with the approved plans. Any variations from the approved plans should be justified prior to the field inspection. Field inspections must be conducted with ample time to make corrections prior to the start of the event. This will vary depending on the size/scope of the event.

A field inspection shall verify that the tent is installed and furnished in compliance with the approved plans. Deviations from the approved plans are subject to approval by the field inspector.

Further information and application forms are available on the San Francisco Fire Department website at <https://sf-fire.org/> . Forms may also be obtained in person from the Permit Section of the San Francisco Fire Department Permit Center, 49 So. Van Ness Ave, San Francisco, CA 94103. (628) 652-3260. Please call or visit during business hours if you need assistance with the fire permit application, submittal requirements, fees, or have operational permit questions.