

5.10 Safety Requirements for Regulated Activities at Outdoor Events and Street Fairs (2025)

Reference: The requirements of this bulletin are referenced from the 2025 San Francisco Fire Code (SFFC) and the National Fire Protection Association Standards including, but not limited to, 2025 SFFC Chapters 1, 3, 31, 53 and 61, and 2021 NFPA 30 and 2020 NFPA 58. For all referenced documents in this bulletin, the most current edition shall be used unless an older edition is currently adopted by the State of California.

Purpose: The purpose of this bulletin is to establish fire safety requirements and guidelines for the use of tents, temporary structures, food booths and portable cooking appliances at outdoor events and street fairs.

Scope: This bulletin applies to the installation and use of tents, temporary structures, bleachers, and food booths and/or the use of portable cooking appliances utilizing LP-gas, butane, propane, natural gas, wood, or charcoal briquettes at outdoor events and street fairs.

Note: Permit applications for regulated activities shall be submitted to the San Francisco Fire Department Bureau of Fire Prevention, Permit Center, a minimum of five (5) business days prior to the event.

I. TENTS, TEMPORARY STRUCTURES, FOOD BOOTHS

1. **Fire Resistance/Flame Retardant.** All tents, temporary membrane structures, and food booths used for cooking or warming of food shall be of inherently flame-resistive material or treated with flame retardant in a manner approved by the California State Fire Marshal. The owner or agent shall submit to the Fire Department proof of fire resistance or flame retardant when applying for a fire permit. Proof of certification of flame resistance or flame retardant shall be available on-site at all times.
2. **Means of Egress.** The means of egress shall comply with the applicable sections of 2025 CFC Chapter 31. For example, a minimum of two (2) exits is required for an occupant load of 10-199 persons.
3. **Cooking Tents.** Cooking tents shall be separated from other tents or temporary membrane structures by at least twenty (20) feet.
4. **Portable Fire Extinguisher Locations.** The minimum number of visible and accessible 2-A 10-B:C (minimum size) portable fire extinguishers with a current California State Fire Marshal (CASFM) service tag to be provided in every tent or temporary membrane structure shall be as follows:
 - A. 200-500 sq. ft. of Floor Area: One (1) Extinguisher.
 - B. 501-1,000 sq. ft. of Floor Area: Two (2) Extinguishers.
 - C. An extinguisher is required for each additional 2,000 sq. ft. or fraction thereof.
5. **Smoking.** Smoking is prohibited in tents or temporary structures. No smoking signs shall be conspicuously posted.

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6. **Tent/Temporary Membrane Structure Greater Than 400 Square Feet.** Any tent or temporary membrane structure having an area greater than 400 square feet requires both a construction permit and a Fire Department operational permit. Proof of liability insurance is also required. An aggregate total of multiple fabric canopies open on all sides exceeding 700 sq. ft. without a twelve (12) foot fire break and not separated at least twelve (12) feet from all structures and other tents requires a separate Fire Department permit.
7. **Bleachers.** The construction of bleachers requires a 3rd party engineering inspection letter. Inspection must be done on-site.
8. **Inspection by Engineer.** Any structure built and/or installed that exceeds 5 feet and 9 inches in height shall be inspected onsite by a qualified engineer. The engineer shall provide a letter to the Fire Department stating they have inspected the structure and it appears to comply with the stamped drawing or manufacture specifications. This letter shall be on a business letter head, signed, and stamped with a signature through the stamp.

Exception: Installation reviewed and approved with a San Francisco Department of Building Permit.

9. **Tent/Temporary Membrane Structure Greater Than 50 Occupants.** Permit applications for the erection or use of a tent or temporary membrane structure with an occupant load of 50 or more persons shall be accompanied by a detailed site map and floor plan. The plans shall include details of the following:
 - A. Occupant load with justification.
 - B. Location and width of egress components.
 - C. Seating and/or content arrangement.
 - D. Emergency lighting.
 - E. Exit signage.
 - F. Number and locations of fire extinguishers.
 - G. Location and type of heating and/or electrical equipment.
 - H. Ballasting Plan with 2" straps.
 - I. Third Party Post Build Engineering Report for tents over 500 occupants, over 5000 square feet, and/or 60 feet in width. Document Inspection (Onsite inspections only).

Note: Please contact the San Francisco Fire Department, Permit Center, 49 South Van Ness Ave, San Francisco, 94103. (628) 652-3260. For additional requirements regarding the installation and use of tents and temporary membrane structures. Also see SFFD Administrative Bulletin 2.13.

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II. COOKING, WARMING OF FOOD

1. **Cooking in Tent/Temporary Membrane Structure/Booth.** Cooking within a tent, temporary membrane structure, or food booth accessible to the public is prohibited.
2. **Cooking with Flammable Gas/Solid Fuel BBQ Grills/Fat Fryers.** Vendors cooking with flammable gas and/or solid fuel BBQ grills and vendors using deep fat fryers shall utilize a minimum vendor space of not less than 200 square feet to accommodate a 10' x 10' cooking area located at the rear of the 10' x 10' food booth.
3. **Cooking Equipment Distance.** Cooking equipment shall not be located within ten (10) feet of exits, exit pathways, and combustibles.
4. **Flammable-Liquid-Fueled Equipment.** Flammable-liquid-fueled equipment shall not be located or used inside tents, temporary membrane structures, or food booths.
5. **Flammable Gas-Burning And Solid Fuel-Burning Equipment.** Flammable gas-burning and solid fuel-burning equipment designed to be vented shall be vented to the outside air as specified in the California Mechanical Code. Where vents or flues are used, all portions of the tent or temporary membrane structure shall not be less than twelve (12) inches from the vent or flue.
6. **Grills/Solid Griddles/Cooking Appliances With Grid Design.** Grills, cooking appliances with perforated or grid design cooking surfaces, and solid griddles shall not be located or used inside tents, temporary membrane structures, or food booths.

Exception: Unless protected by a Type I hood with a fire suppression system.
7. **Portable Fire Extinguishers For Cooking/Warming Areas.** One (1) visible and accessible 2-A 10-B:C (minimum size) portable fire extinguisher with a current CASFM service tag shall be provided for each cooking and warming area.
8. **Sterno/Butane.** The warming of food using sterno or butane may be allowed within a food booth provided the heat-producing device is on a non-combustible surface and a minimum eighteen (18) inch clearance is maintained from all portions of the booth envelope and all combustible materials. Sterno and butane shall be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
9. **Grease Laden Vapors.** The warming/cooking of food that produces grease laden vapors is strictly prohibited under a canopy or in a tent unless warming/cooking of food is performed under an approved hood and ansul system.
10. **Umbrellas and Pop Ups.** Umbrellas, Pop ups, etc. are not approved over cooking equipment.

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III. DEEP FAT COOKING, OPEN FLAME COOKING

1. **Deep Fat Cooking.** Deep fat cooking shall not be located or used inside tents, temporary membrane structures, or food booths. (Exception: unless protected by a Type I hood with a fire suppression system). Deep fat cooking shall be located a minimum of twenty (20) feet from a tent, canopy, or structure and ten (10) feet from food booths and cooking tents.
2. **Portable Fire Extinguisher For Four Fryers.** One (1) 1.5 gallon (minimum size) accessible Class K portable fire extinguisher with a current CASFM service tag is required for up to four (4) fryers having a maximum cooking medium capacity of eighty (80) pounds each.
3. **Clearance For Open Flame Cooking Devices/Barbecues.** Open flame cooking devices and barbecues shall be located a minimum of twenty (20) feet from tents or temporary membrane structures and five (5) feet from food booths and cooking tents.
4. **Barbecue Units.** Barbecue units shall be constantly attended while in use or until cool. A metal container with a metal lid shall be provided to deposit burning, glowing, or smoldering charcoal briquettes or wood chips. The covered, non-combustible container shall be located at least two (2) feet from combustible materials.

IV. USE OF FLAMMABLE GAS

1. **Maximum Amount of Propane/Storage Cylinders.** The maximum amount of propane and the maximum number of storage cylinders allowed on-site shall be based on the following sizes of the food booth and the adjoining cooking areas:
 - A. **10' x 10' Food Booth And Cooking Area.** A maximum of twenty (20) gallons of propane is allowed per location if a vendor is provided with space for a 10' x 10' food booth and a 10' x 10' cooking area located at the rear of the booth. No more than four (4) cylinders are allowed on-site. The maximum cylinder size shall not exceed ten (10) gallons unless approved by the Permit Section Officer.
 - B. **10' x 20' Food Booth And Cooking Area.** A maximum of forty (40) gallons of propane is allowed per location if a vendor is provided with space for a 10' x 20' food booth and a 10' x 20' cooking area located at the rear of the booth. No more than six (6) cylinders are allowed on-site. The maximum cylinder size shall not exceed ten (10) gallons unless approved by the Permit Section Officer.
2. **D.O.T Approved.** Only D.O.T.-approved portable LP-gas, propane, natural gas, and butane cylinders shall be used. Cylinders shall be in good condition, properly labeled, and without dents or corrosion.
3. **Clearance And Location of Gas Cylinders.** Flammable gas cylinders shall be located and stored outside of tents, temporary membrane structures, and food booths. Unless listed to be installed as a component of the appliance (e.g. cassette fuel), gas cylinders shall be located a minimum of five (5) feet from cooking and heating appliances.

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4. **Distance from Structures and Exits.** Cylinders shall be located in areas not accessible to the public and at least ten (10) feet from all structures, exits, and exit pathways.
5. **Prevention From Falling.** Compressed gas cylinders shall be secured in the upright position and prevented from falling, tipping, and tampering.
6. **Shut-Off Valve For Flammable-Gas-Fueled Appliances.** Flammable-gas-fueled appliances shall be equipped with a shut-off valve located on the storage cylinder and a shut-off valve located on the appliance.
7. **UL Approved Pressure Regulator.** An Underwriters Laboratories (UL) approved pressure regulator shall be installed on the fuel supply hose between the storage cylinder and the appliance. The regulator shall be installed on the storage cylinder. Regulators shall be fixed and compatible with cooking equipment. Adjustable regulators will not be approved unless approved with a letter from the Fire Marshal.
8. **Appliances/Hoses/Connectors.** Cooking and heating appliances, hoses, and connectors shall be approved for use with its type of fuel source. Hose shall be continuously marked with “LP-GAS, PROPANE, 350 PSI WORKING PRESSURE” and the manufacturer’s name or trademark. Appliance handles, knobs, and control valves shall be in good working condition. Faulty cooking appliances, hoses, valves, and connectors shall be removed from service immediately.
9. **Leak Test.** A leak test shall be performed on all pressurized flammable gas connections prior to using the cooking or heating appliance and after each changing of cylinders. Each vendor using pressurized flammable gas shall provide and maintain an on-site spray bottle filled with a soapy solution to perform leak tests. Changing of cylinders requires a reinspection from the fire department.
10. **Odor of Gas.** Appliances and fuel supply shall be shut down immediately whenever there is an odor of LP-gas, natural gas, or butane gas. Inspection shall be performed to determine the source of the leak. If the origin of the leak cannot be determined, call 911 and request assistance from the Fire Department.
11. **No Spare Propane Cylinders.** No spare propane cylinders allowed on-site.
12. **Cooking Area Barricaded.** The cooking area shall be barricaded from the public.

V. PORTABLE GENERATORS

1. **Fuel Capacity - Separate Permit.** Portable generators with a gasoline fuel capacity of more than ten (10) gallons or a diesel fuel capacity of more than sixty (60) gallons require a separate Fire Department permit.
2. **Clearance And Location of Portable Generators.** Portable generators shall be separated from tents, canopies, and membrane structures by a minimum of twenty (20) feet and shall be isolated from contact with the public by fencing, enclosure, or other approved means.

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Exception: Portable generators with a gasoline fuel capacity of ten (10) gallons or less or a diesel fuel capacity of sixty (60) gallons or less may be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from food booths, exits and exit pathways, and shall be located in an area not accessible to the public.

3. **Portable Fire Extinguisher For Portable Generators.** Each generator shall be provided with one (1) visible and accessible 20-B (minimum size) portable fire extinguisher with a current CASFM service tag.
4. **Refueling Restrictions And Clearance.** Generators shall not be refueled during public hours of the event. Generators shall not be refueled when the engine is running or hot and shall be performed at least twenty (20) feet from tents, canopies, and structures.
5. **No Spare Fuel.** No spare fuel allowed on site.
6. **Generators Barricaded.** Generators shall be barricaded from the public.
7. **Sign and Placard.** No smoking sign and NFPA 704 placard shall be posted.

VI. FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCESS

1. **Emergency Access Lanes.** All Fire Department emergency access lanes shall be maintained at a minimum of fourteen (14) feet wide at all times during street fairs. Fire Department access lanes shall not be obstructed in any manner at any time.
2. **Fire Hydrants.** A minimum five (5) foot clear space shall be maintained around the circumference of fire hydrants. A minimum access width of five (5) feet shall be provided to the hydrant at all times.
3. **Intersections.** Shall provide a 20 foot set back from intersections.

General Notes: Failure to comply with these requirements may result in not being permitted to operate at an outdoor event or street fair within the City and County of San Francisco. Your cooperation is requested to ensure that the highest level of fire safety is maintained. Please contact us at (628) 652-3260 if you have any questions.