



# NIH Division of the Fire Marshal

## Administrative Interpretation 22-1

### Tents

**Code references:** NFPA 1 (2021) Table 1.12.8(a) (Permit Requirements), sections 10.14 (Special Outdoor Events) and 25.2 (Tents); NFPA 101 (2021), section 11.11 (Tents) and Chapter 12 (Assembly Occupancies).

**Background:** This interpretation summarizes the NIH program of fire prevention and protection for tents and canopies on NIH-owned properties. It is applicable only to canopies (roof only) over 400 square feet (SF) and tents (with one or more walls) over 200 SF. Mobile and temporary cooking requirements are addressed in a separate DFM Administrative Interpretation (see DFM web site for the most current).

### Interpretation:

#### 1. Approval process:

- a. Event Sponsor must have an approved site selection request.
- b. Event sponsor must notify the Division of the Fire Marshal (DFM) in advance by emailing event information to the Fire Prevention global email address.
- c. Sponsor must provide name, company, phone number, event date & time, tent size & location, activities within tent, and tent setup & removal dates.
- d. DFM staff will arrange a time to inspect the tent prior to occupancy.
- e. DFM inspections are conducted only on weekdays from 6:30 AM to 3:00 PM.
- f. Event sponsor must be present during DFM inspection.
- g. DFM approval will be effective for the duration and location of a single event only.
- h. DFM approval serves as the required fire safety permit; other aspects such as electrical safety and structural integrity are outside of DFM's authority.
- i. Follow ORF's Tent Erection Policy 12002, dated 2/8/06.

#### 2. Additional requirements for tents with at least 2 sides enclosed:

- a. Submit a diagram at least 4 weeks in advance showing:
  - To scale or dimensioned
  - Event information: date, time, activities within tent, setup & removal dates
  - Sponsor Information: name, phone number

- Tent erector information: company, contact name, phone number
  - Nearby buildings, parking, food service, other tents, fire dept. access
  - Layout of furniture and equipment
  - Aisle widths
  - Exit door or opening locations, width, and height
  - Exit signs
  - Fire extinguisher locations
  - Heating and cooling equipment
  - Location of generator and fuel storage
  - Locations of any flammable liquids or gases
  - Location of electric power shutoff
- b. DFM will review within 2 weeks.
- c. DFM will send the approved diagram with any conditional comments to the sponsor, DFM inspectors, and the NIH Fire Department.
3. Additional requirements for tents containing Assembly Occupancies (350 SF for standing or chairs only; 750 SF for tables & chairs):
- a. Trained crowd managers (one per 250 occupants).
  - b. Post occupant load.
  - c. Normal Illumination and emergency lighting if over 1,200 SF.
  - d. Illuminated exit signs.
  - e. Curtains and decorations fire retardant.
4. Requirements to be followed during an event by the sponsor:
- a. Sponsor must have certification of tent fire retardancy.
  - b. Follow direction of DFM inspector.
  - c. Maintain all features on the approved diagram (if needed).
  - d. Report any fires, hazardous materials spills, or other emergencies to the Fire Department (Bethesda campus 911 from land line or 301-496-9911 from cell) even if the fire appears to be out or the emergency mitigated.
  - e. If an NIH fire extinguisher is discharged, contact the NIH Fire Department at 301 496-2372

**Supersedes:** N/A

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**Date Issued** 1-26-22 **Fire Marshal** M. Chibbaro

## Tent Approval Checklist

- **References** are to the 2021 edition of NFPA 1 unless noted otherwise.
- Checklist is summarized - **See the code references for detailed requirements.**

Permit Required for tents > 200 and canopies > 400 SF <b>1.12.8</b>
Tents with at least 2 sides enclosed meet DFM-approved plan
Mobile and temporary cooking meets DFM Administrative Interpretation 21-3
Temporary NTE 180 days <b>25.2.1.1</b>
Certificate or test report provided for tent flammability <b>25.2.2</b>
Minimum of 10 ft. between stake lines <b>25.2.3.1</b>
Separation of 10 ft. from other structures <b>25.2.3.3</b>
Tents > 1200 ft <sup>2</sup> separated from each other by 10 ft. <b>25.2.3.4</b>
Combustible material or vegetation cleared for 10 ft. around tent <b>25.2.4.1</b>
Portable fire extinguishers provided <b>25.2.5</b>
Access provided for emergency vehicles & fire protection equipment <b>10.14.2</b>
Hazardous conditions dangerous to life and property are abated <b>10.14.2</b>
Heaters listed and labeled <b>NFPA 101, 11.11.6.1</b>
LP gas containers meet the following <b>NFPA 101, 11.11.6.1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secured upright</li> <li>• Protected from vehicle impact</li> <li>• Located at least 5 ft. from tent</li> </ul>
Additional requirements for tents with assembly occupancies <b>NFPA 101, Ch. 12</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained crowd managers (one per 250 occupants)</li> <li>• Post occupant load</li> <li>• Normal Illumination and emergency lighting if tent over 1,200 SF</li> <li>• Illuminated exit signs</li> <li>• Curtains and decorations fire retardant</li> </ul>