

# Tents, Canopies, and Membrane Structures

## 1. Purpose and Disclaimer

This document has been compiled by the City of Indianapolis Department of Code Enforcement (DCE). The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the users and installers of temporary tents, canopies, and membrane structures. This is not an exhaustive manual for the procurement, design, permitting, installation, and operation of temporary tents, canopies, and membrane structures. Rather, this should be seen as a guide regarding permit requirements and inspection criteria in the City of Indianapolis. This supplements any instructions, requirements, and warnings that are provided by manufacturers, engineers, and the Indiana codes.

## 2. Pilot Program

Due to the passage of the new special events ordinance and the activities associated with Super Bowl XLVI, the Department of Code Enforcement (DCE) issued structural permits and limited duration licenses for temporary tents, canopies and membrane structures. These were typically fully enclosed, heated structures that contained food service or cooking equipment, alcohol service, and assembly type use. To provide the same level of life-safety, structural, and fire protection review, DCE will continue to issue structural permits for tents and similar structures.

The Building Standards and Procedures of the Consolidated City of Indianapolis (Chapter 536 of the Revised Code) was not developed to account for the lesser review necessary for these types of structures as compared to permanent structures. Therefore, it is necessary to amend the ordinance to ensure that the DCE's regulation is not overly broad. Until this ordinance can be amended, DCE will utilize the pilot program outlined below to ensure that life-safety and structural integrity are being maintained without overly burdening residential or small business activity.

The provisions of this pilot program only apply to temporary tents, canopies, and membrane structures. Temporary is defined as being erected on a single premise for less than 30 days within a 12 month period. This is the maximum duration of time that a temporary tent, canopy, or membrane structure can be erected and be classified as temporary per Section 2403.5 of the 2008 Indiana Fire Code.

Section 536-201 of the Revised Code requires that DCE issue a structural permit for any structure exceeding 120 square feet in size. This distinction, while prudent for permanent structures, is not necessarily relevant to the use of similarly sized temporary tents, canopies, and membrane structures. As such, the following shall be exempt from permitting requirements:

- (1) Tents or membrane structures of less than 200 square feet in size and not containing an open or exposed flame. This is the minimum threshold that requires compliance with Chapter 24 of the 2008 Indiana Fire Code;
- (2) Canopies of less than 400 square feet in size and not containing an open or exposed flame. This is the minimum threshold that requires compliance with Chapter 24 of the 2008 Indiana Fire Code; and
- (3) Tents and membrane structures between 200 and 3200 square feet in size and not containing an open or exposed flame that comply with the notification requirements. This does not exempt the structure from compliance with Chapter 24 of the 2008 Indiana Fire Code.
- (4) Canopies between 400 and 3200 square feet in size and not containing an open or exposed flame that comply with the notification requirements. This does not exempt the structure from compliance with Chapter 24 of the 2008 Indiana Fire Code.

### 3. Notifications

Temporary tents or membrane structures between 200 and 3200 square feet in size or canopies between 400 and 3200 square feet in size that do not contain an open or exposed flame do not require a permit if the notification requirements are followed.

The notification requirements include:

- (1) Submission of a DCE Temporary Structure Notification. The form is located on the DCE website at [www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DCE/pages/home.aspx](http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DCE/pages/home.aspx). The form must be received by DCE 48 hours prior to the erection of the temporary structure. If the installation is a rental, the entity renting the temporary structure must receive a copy. The notification should be posted on the site at the commencement of installation activity. Notification forms may be emailed to [tents@indy.gov](mailto:tents@indy.gov) or mailed to ATTN: Tents; 1200 Madison Ave., Suite 100; Indianapolis, IN 46225.
- (2) Contractors installing the temporary structure may utilize the notification form if they are in good standing with DCE. A contractor may lose the ability to provide notifications if required licensure is expired or excessive violations or stop work orders have been issued. Absent the notification process, a permit is required.
- (3) Property owners or renters may utilize the notification form if they, their employees, or volunteers are installing the temporary structure. A property owner or renter may lose the ability to provide notifications if excessive violations or stop work orders have been issued. Absent the notification process, a permit is required.

### 4. Permits

Tents or membrane structures exceeding 200 square feet without a notification, canopies exceeding 400 square feet without a notification, all temporary tents, canopies, or membrane structures exceeding 3200 square feet in size, or any size of structure containing an open or exposed flame would require a structural permit and inspection. In order to obtain a structural permit an applicant will be required to submit an application, provide drawings or plans in accordance with Section 536-205(b) of the Revised Code, and pass an inspection prior to occupancy/use.

The permit requirements include:

- (1) Submission of a DCE Temporary Structure Permit Application. The form is located on the DCE website at [www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DCE/pages/home.aspx](http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DCE/pages/home.aspx). Required fees must be submitted with the application.
- (2) Submission of construction documents.
  - (a) Required: A scaled site plan with the location of temporary structures, anchors, guywires, property lines, structures, parked vehicles, trailers, and any other permanent or temporary structures that could not be moved during an inspection.
  - (b) Required: A scaled interior layout plan with the location of tables, chairs, platforms, and exits. Indicate on plans number of exits, exit sizes, means of egress, and occupant load.
  - (c) Required: Operational management plans including identification of emergency decision-making personnel and plans and criteria for evacuation.
  - (d) Optional: Construction documents and details stamped by an Indiana registered architect or engineer for utilization of structures in wind speeds exceeding 30 miles per hour.
- (3) Beginning September 4, 2012, a structural permit fee will be required for all permitted tents, canopies, and membrane structures. The fee for a structural permit is listed in Section 131-501 of the Code. The fee includes an application fee (currently listed at \$32.00) and a general construction permit fee (currently listed at \$170.00). The permit fee includes the initial inspection.

#### 5. Additional Permitting and Notification Requirements and Exclusions

- A. Temporary tents, canopies, and membrane structures would not be required to obtain an Improvement Location Permit or a Certificate of Appropriateness.
- B. Multiple temporary tents, canopies, or membrane structures associated with a single event and/or located on a single property may only be required to obtain one (1) structural permit for the event and/or property. This shall only be permissible if all temporary structures associated with the event and/or located on a single property are ready for inspection at a single point in time.
- C. The applicant is responsible for notification and applications to other government entities including, but not limited to, the Indianapolis Fire Department (or other local fire jurisdiction) and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

#### 6. Posting of Permits and Notifications

All permits and notifications must be posted on the property where the tents, canopies, and membrane structures are installed. The permits and notification must be visible to the general public.

## 7. Scheduling Inspections

All permitted tents, canopies, and membrane structures require an inspection prior to occupancy and use. Inspections may be requested for structures not requiring a permit. Inspections must be scheduled 2 business days prior to the requested inspection. A phone number and email address are provided on the permits and notification forms.

## 8. Review and Inspections for Compliance with Indiana Codes

- A. Contractors, installers, owners, and renters would be advised to make themselves familiar with the codes adopted by the State of Indiana. Tents, canopies, or membrane structures are subject to Chapter 24 of the 2008 Indiana Fire Code (IFC), which is an amended version of the 2006 International Fire Code.
- B. Installations may be reviewed and/or inspected for compliance with the IFC and other state codes as applicable. A tent is defined as having side panels, screening, or other enclosures, fencing, or structures that impact egress on over 25% of the perimeter. If the membrane structure is constrained on 25% or less of the perimeter, it is a canopy. If panels are provided for installation in case of inclement weather, then it is treated as a tent.
- C. All tents and canopies must meet all related code requirements (e.g. electrical, fuel, other chapters of IFC). The grounds where the tents and canopies are located must have access roads for fire apparatus.
- D. Scope tents or membrane structures (defined as a tent 200 square feet in size or less ) and scope canopies (defined as a canopy of 400 square feet or less) are exempt from IFC chapter 24 except for section 2404. The requirements and exemptions for scope tents and canopies include, but are not limited to:
  - (1) Flame Propagation Performance Treatment (FPPT) is not required for scope tents and canopies.
  - (2) Open flame devices (including cooking devices) are permitted provided that a 10' clearance between the tent and canopy and other items, including other buildings, vehicles, and other tents and canopies. The clearance is measured from the stakes.
  - (3) Smoking is permitted under scope tents and canopies.
- E. Tents or membrane structures that exceed 200 square feet and canopies that exceed 400 square feet must meet the requirements of IFC chapter 24. The requirements include, but are not limited to:
  - (1) Tents and canopies must receive FPPT and have a permanent FPPT label affixed.
  - (2) Open flames or LP tanks are not allowed under or within 10 feet of the canvas or stakes.
  - (3) Tents and canopies must meet egress requirements including aisle width and clearance. Tents must, also, meet egress requirements for number of exits, exit widths, and illuminated exit signage.
  - (4) "No Smoking" signs, emergency illumination, and fire extinguishers must be installed.
  - (5) A 3' interior perimeter clearance must be maintained.
  - (6) Space heaters must be UL listed.

- (7) Vehicles for display under tents and canopies must have the battery disconnected, fuel removed, and the fuel cap locked and taped.
- F. A single tent, canopy, or membrane structure that is 15,000 square feet or greater must, also, have a 50' separation from structures and other tents (unless tents are connected by corridor).
- G. Tents, canopies, and membrane structures with an aggregate area of 15,000 square feet or greater must, also, have a 20' separation from structures, scope tents & canopies, and vehicles.

#### 9. Review and Inspections for Compliance with Industry Standards

Contractors, installers, owners, and renters should make themselves familiar with the standards identified by the Tent Rental Division of the Industrial Fabrics Association International, including but not limited to the *IFAI Procedural Handbook for the Safe Installation and Maintenance of Tentage* and *IFAI Pullout Capacity of Tent Stakes*. Tents, canopies, or membrane structures should be built in compliance with these standards.

#### 10. Review and Inspections for Compliance with Engineering Standards

Contractors, installers, owners, and renters should make themselves familiar with the wind load standards identified by *ASCE/SEI 7-05 Minimum Design Loads for Buildings and Other Structures*. Tents, canopies, or membrane structures should be built in compliance with these standards. In calculating the anchorage load for tents, canopies, and membrane structures, the following safety factors shall be added as applicable:

- A. Anchored by stake: 1.5 for frame supported structures; 2.0 for pole supported structures
- B. Anchored by concrete: 2.0 for frame supported structures
- C. Anchored by water container: 4.0 for frame supported structures
- D. Guywires attached to top of concrete or water container (maximum 3' above ground) for frame supported structures: 1.5

#### 11. Inspections for Compliance During Occupancy

Contractors, installers, owners, and renters should make themselves familiar with the submitted and approved Construction Documents, including the Operational Management Plans. Tents, canopies, and membrane structures should be operated in compliance with the plans. These structures may receive inspections during occupancy to ensure compliance with the plans as well as the continued compliance with codes and standards.

#### 12. Administrative Fees

- A. Beginning July 30, 2012, an administrative fee will be assigned to violations including but not limited to installation without notifications or permits, and failing to obtain an inspection prior to occupancy.

- B. The administrative fee is listed in Section 131-501 of the Code (currently listed at \$215.00).
- C. Beginning July 30, 2012, inspection requests that are submitted without a 48 hours notice will be subject to accelerated inspection fees as identified in Section 131-502 of the Code.
- D. For inspections described in 2.E) would be subject to a \$154.00 general construction inspection fee.