



**YORK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SAFETY  
2015 INTERNATIONAL FIRE CODE REQUIREMENTS GUIDE FOR TENTS**

Tents that are required to be permitted shall meet the requirements listed in the 2015 International Fire Code, Chapter 31. The items listed below are a summary of the requirements which need to be met.

1. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.2 requires permits to be obtained before erecting membrane structures or temporary tents with sides exceeding 400 square feet, and tents without sides exceeding 700 square feet. (Tents used exclusively for recreational camping are exempt from the permit requirement). Permits are obtained through the York County Building & Codes Department. (803) 909-7200. A commercial building permit application, site plan layout, and a flame treatment certificate shall be provided for review and approval prior to obtaining a permit.
2. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.8.1 requires fire apparatus access roads to extend to within 150 feet of all portions of the tent. The access road must be a minimum of 20 feet in width. Dead end access roads shall not exceed 150 feet in length unless approved turnaround is provided.
3. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.8.2 requires tents or membrane structures to not be located within 20 feet of lot lines, buildings, other tents, canopies or membrane structures, parked vehicles, or internal combustion engines. For the purpose of determining required distances, support ropes and guy wires shall be considered as part of the temporary membrane structure, tent or canopy.
4. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.9 requires tents or membrane structures and their appurtenances to 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.
5. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.12.1 requires exits to be spaced at approximately equal intervals around the perimeter of the tent, canopy or membrane structure, and shall be located such that all points are 100 feet or less from an exit.
6. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.12.2 requires tents, canopies or membrane structures or a usable portion thereof to have at least one exit and not less than the number of exits required by Table 3103.12.2. The total width of means of egress in inches shall not be less than the total occupant load served by a means of egress multiplied by 0.2 inches per person.
7. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.12.3 requires exit openings from tents to remain open unless covered by a flame-resistant curtain. The curtain shall comply with the following requirements: (1.) Curtains shall be free sliding on a metal support. The support shall be a minimum of 80 inches above the floor level at the exit. The curtains shall be so arranged that, when open, no part of the curtain obstructs the exit. (2.) Curtains shall be of a color, or colors, that contrast with the color of the tent. Not required for canopies with no sides.
8. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.12.6 requires the installation of exit signs for tents with occupancy of 50 or more. Exit signs shall be internally or externally illuminated or be approved self-luminous.

9. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3103.12.7 requires the means of egress to be illuminated at all times the structure is occupied. Power for the means of egress illumination must be provided from a separate circuit or source of power.
10. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.2 requires, before a permit is granted, the owner or agent shall file with the fire code official a certificate executed by an approved testing laboratory certifying that the tents, canopies and membrane structures and their appurtenances, sidewalls, drops and tarpaulins, floor coverings, bunting and combustible decorative materials and effects, including sawdust when used on floors or passageways, shall be composed of material meeting the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701 or shall be treated with a flame retardant in an approved manner and meet the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701, and that such flame propagation performance criteria are effective for the period specified by the permit.
11. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.3 requires membrane structures, tents to have a permanently affixed label bearing the identification of size and fabric or material type.
12. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.4 requires an affidavit or affirmation to be submitted to the fire code official and a copy retained on the premises on which the tent or air-supported structure is located. The affidavit shall attest to the following information relative to the flame propagation performance criteria of the fabric: (1.) Names and address of the owners of the tent, canopy or air-supported structure. (2.) Date the fabric was last treated with flame-retardant solution. (3.) Trade name or kind of chemical used in treatment. (4.) Name of person or firm treating the material. (5.) Name of testing agency and test standard by which the fabric was tested.
13. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.6 requires smoking to not be permitted in tents, canopies or membrane structures. Approved "No Smoking" signs shall be conspicuously posted in accordance with Section 310.
14. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.7 requires 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 to not be permitted inside or located within 20 feet of the tent or membrane structures while open to the public unless approved by the fire code official.
15. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.11 requires there to be a minimum clearance of at least 3 feet between the fabric envelope and all contents located inside the tent or membrane structure.
16. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.12 requires portable fire extinguishers to be provided as required by Section 906.
17. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.19 requires generators and other internal combustion power sources to be separated from tents or membrane structures by a minimum of 20 feet and shall be isolated from contact with the public by fencing, enclosure or other approved means.
18. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.21 requires combustible vegetation to be removed from the area occupied by a tent or membrane structure, and from areas within 30 feet of such structures.
19. The 2015 International Fire Code, section 3104.22 requires the floor surface inside tents or membrane structures and the grounds outside and within a 30-foot perimeter to be kept clear of combustible waste. Such waste shall be stored in approved containers until removed from the premises.