

## CHAPTER 31

# TENTS AND OTHER MEMBRANE STRUCTURES

### SECTION 3101 GENERAL

**3101.1 Scope.** Tents, temporary stage canopies and membrane structures shall comply with this chapter. The provisions of Section 3103 are applicable only to temporary tents and membrane structures. The provisions of Section 3104 are applicable to temporary and permanent tents and membrane structures. Other temporary structures shall comply with the California Building Code.

*These building standards govern the use of tents, awnings or other fabric enclosures, including membrane (air-supported and air-inflated) structures and places of assemblage, in or under which 10 or more persons may gather for any lawful purpose.*

#### Exceptions:

1. Tents, awnings or other fabric enclosures used to cover or enclose private swimming pools and similar facilities on the premises of private one- and two-family dwellings.
2. Tents used to conduct committal services on the ground of a cemetery.
3. Tents, awnings or other fabric enclosures erected and used within a sound stage, or other similar structural enclosure which is equipped with an overhead automatic sprinkler system.
4. Tensioned membrane roof materials supported by rigid frames or installed on a mast and cable system provided such structures conform to the requirements of one of the types of construction as described in these regulations.
5. Fabric structures which are part of mobile homes, recreational vehicles, or commercial coaches governed by the provisions of Division 13, Part 2, Health and Safety Code (Department of Housing and Community Development).

[California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, §303.(a) and (b)] Scope.

(a) The provisions of California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 2 apply to the sale, offering for sale, manufacture for sale, rental and use of tents within this state.

(b) For building standards relating to tents and membrane structures, see California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 9.

**3101.2 Alternate means of protection.** When approved by the enforcing agency, exceptions to the provisions of these building standards may be permitted, provided alternate means of protection which are at least equal to these regulations in quality, strength, effectiveness, fire resistance, durability and safety are provided.

**3101.3 Labor camps.** Tents used in labor camps for the housing of employees shall have tight wooden floors raised at least 4 inches (102 mm) above ground level having baseboards on all sides to a height of at least 6 inches (152 mm) or shall have concrete slabs with finished surface at least 4 inches (102 mm) above grade having baseboards on all sides to a height of at least 6 inches (152 mm).

*Electrical installations serving and installed within tents shall comply with the applicable requirements of the California Electrical Code.*

*Tents shall not be considered suitable sleeping places when it is found necessary to provide heating facilities in order to maintain a minimum temperature of 60°F (33.3°C) within such tent during the period of occupancy.*

*Note: See Section 17008 of the Health and Safety Code for definition of labor camp.*

### SECTION 3102 DEFINITIONS

**3102.1 Definitions.** The following terms are defined in Chapter 2:

**AIR-INFLATED STRUCTURE.**  
**AIR-SUPPORTED STRUCTURE.**  
**MEMBRANE STRUCTURE.**  
**TEMPORARY STAGE CANOPY.**  
**TENT.**

### SECTION 3103 TEMPORARY TENTS AND MEMBRANE STRUCTURES

**3103.1 General.** Tents and membrane structures used for temporary periods shall comply with this section. Other temporary structures erected for a period of 180 days or less shall comply with the California Building Code.

**3103.2 Approval required.** Tents and membrane structures having an area in excess of 400 square feet (37 m<sup>2</sup>) shall not be erected, operated or maintained for any purpose without first obtaining a permit and approval from the fire code official.

#### Exceptions:

1. Tents used exclusively for recreational camping purposes.
2. Tents open on all sides that comply with all of the following:
  - 2.1. Individual tents having a maximum size of 700 square feet (65 m<sup>2</sup>).

2.2. The aggregate area of multiple tents placed side by side without a fire break clearance of 12 feet (3658 mm), not exceeding 700 square feet (65 m<sup>2</sup>) total.

2.3. A minimum clearance of 12 feet (3658 mm) to all structures and other tents.

**3103.3 Place of assembly.** For the purposes of this chapter, a place of assembly shall include a circus, carnival, tent show, theater, skating rink, dance hall or other place of assembly in or under which persons gather for any purpose.

**3103.4 Permits.** Permits shall be required as set forth in Sections 105.6 and 105.7.

**3103.5 Use period.** Temporary tents, air-supported, air-inflated or tensioned membrane structures shall not be erected for a period of more than 180 days within a 12-month period on a single premises.

**3103.6 Construction documents.** A detailed site and floor plan for tents or membrane structures with an occupant load of 50 or more shall be provided with each application for approval. The tent or membrane structure floor plan shall indicate details of the means of egress facilities, seating capacity, arrangement of the seating and location and type of heating and electrical equipment.

**3103.7 Inspections.** The entire tent, air-supported, air-inflated or tensioned membrane structure system shall be inspected at regular intervals, but not less than two times per permit use period, by the permittee, owner or agent to determine that the installation is maintained in accordance with this chapter.

**Exception:** Permit use periods of less than 30 days.

**3103.7.1 Inspection report.** Where required by the fire code official, an inspection report shall be provided and shall consist of maintenance, anchors and fabric inspections.

**3103.8 Access, location and parking.** Access, location and parking for temporary tents and membrane structures shall be in accordance with this section.

**3103.8.1 Access.** Fire apparatus access roads shall be provided in accordance with Section 503.

**3103.8.2 Location.** Tents or membrane structures shall not be located within 20 feet (6096 mm) of lot lines, buildings, other tents 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 or tent.

**Exceptions:**

1. Separation distance between membrane structures and tents not used for cooking is not required where the aggregate floor area does not exceed 15,000 square feet (1394 m<sup>2</sup>).
2. Membrane structures or tents need not be separated from buildings when all of the following conditions are met:

2.1. The aggregate floor area of the membrane structure or tent shall not exceed 10,000 square feet (929 m<sup>2</sup>).

2.2. The aggregate floor area of the building and membrane structure or tent shall not exceed the allowable floor area including increases as indicated in the *California Building Code*.

2.3. Required means of egress are provided for both the building and the membrane structure or tent including travel distances.

2.4. Fire apparatus access roads are provided in accordance with Section 503.

3. When approved by the enforcing agency, tents may be located in or on permanent buildings provided such use does not constitute an undue hazard.

**[California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, §312] Parking of Vehicles.**

*Vehicles necessary to the operation of the establishment, shall be parked at least 20 feet from any tent. No other vehicle shall be parked less than 100 feet from any tent except vehicles parked on a public street shall park at least 20 feet from any tent.*

**3103.8.3 Location of structures in excess of 15,000 square feet in area.** Membrane structures having an area of 15,000 square feet (1394 m<sup>2</sup>) or more shall be located not less than 50 feet (15 240 mm) from any other tent or structure as measured from the sidewall of the tent or membrane structure unless joined together by a corridor.

**3103.8.4 Membrane structures on buildings.** Membrane structures that are erected on buildings, balconies, decks or other structures shall be regulated as permanent membrane structures in accordance with Section 3102 of the *California Building Code*.

**3103.8.5 Connecting corridors.** Tents or membrane structures are allowed to be joined together by means of corridors. Exit doors shall be provided at each end of such corridor. On each side of such corridor and approximately opposite each other, there shall be provided openings not less than 12 feet (3658 mm) wide.

**3103.8.6 Fire break.** An unobstructed fire break passageway or fire road not less than 12 feet (3658 mm) wide and free from guy ropes or other obstructions shall be maintained on all sides of all tents and membrane structures unless otherwise approved by the fire code official.

**3103.9 Anchorage required.** Tents or membrane structures and their appurtenances shall 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.

**3103.9.1 Tents and membrane structures exceeding one story.** Tents and membrane structures exceeding one story shall be designed and constructed to comply with Chapter 16 of the *California Building Code*.