



Building Advisory B23-008  
March 18, 2025

Subject: Temporary Outdoor Tents and Canopies

#### Background:

This advisory will provide an explanation and guidelines for when temporary tents, canopies and stages that are used in public events may be exempt from a building permit, qualify for a quick release building permit or require a commercial new building, permit review.

As clarified by [STANDATA interpretation 23-BCI-010/23-FCI-013 - Special Events](#), special events such as, weddings, sporting events, charity runs and walks, music performances, street festivals, parades, block parties, film industry productions and other events are subject to the Safety Codes Act and its regulations including building, electrical, fire, plumbing and gas codes, the land use bylaw and other licensing requirements.

STANDATA 23-BCI-10 also confirms that the process and processing of special events, both indoor and outdoor special events, are at the discretion of the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) in the municipality at which the event is occurring. The AHJ can create a permitting process and inspection process to assist all parties involved with completing these events.

The National Building Code (Alberta Edition) [NBC (AE)], Division C, Article 2.2.11.3. Temporary Use gives an AHJ the discretionary power to allow the temporary use or occupancy of a building even though the building may not comply entirely with all requirements of the NBC(AE). Exceptions to compliance with all requirements are permitted in cases where buildings are intended for use and/or occupancy for short periods of time. This approach allows tents and canopy structures to be erected and occupied at special events.

Additionally, the SAFETY CODES ACT, PERMIT REGULATION Alberta Regulation 204/2007, 6(3)(f)(ii) confirms that a building permit is not required for tents that comply with the following:

1. Tents that are located on a property that is designated for residential use and used as a single-family residential dwelling and are not used for a commercial purpose.
2. Tents that are more than 3 metres away from any other structure and that do not cover, and is not part of a group of tents that collectively cover, more than 60 m<sup>2</sup> of ground.
3. A tent that does not contain any commercial cooking equipment.

In relation to point 2, the City of Calgary considers any tents closer than 3m to each other to be viewed collectively, or as a cluster. Once tents are viewed to form a cluster, the total area of the tents will be evaluated cumulatively. If tents are spaced greater than 3m apart, they are viewed as individual tents and do not form a cluster.

#### General permit requirements:

##### **Professional involvement:**

The NBC (AE), Division C, Section 2.4 Professional Design and Review, gives an AHJ direction for when drawings and specifications shall be authenticated by a registered professional. The requirements for temporary tents, canopies, stages and overhead structures that are used in public events are as follows:

- Drawings and specifications shall be authenticated by an architect and engineer for any tent or a cluster of tents where the area exceeds 300 m<sup>2</sup> and the tent contains stages, bleachers or sidewalls.
- Drawings and specifications shall be authenticated by an engineer for any tent, canopy or a cluster of tents and canopies where the area exceeds 300 m<sup>2</sup> in area.
- Drawings and specifications shall be authenticated by an architect and engineer if the platform of a stage is more than 1.2 meters above an adjacent surface on any side, or is more than 300 m<sup>2</sup> in area.
- Drawings and specifications shall be authenticated by an engineer for any overhead structure that is used or intended to be used in conjunction with a stage or a tent.
- If the size or complexity of a project gives rise to a safety concerns, the AHJ may require the involvement of one or more registered professionals to authenticate all or part of the drawings and specifications and perform field reviews.
- Completed A and B Schedules of Professional Involvement shall be provided by the applicant at application stage for all work that requires professional involvement. Completed C Schedules shall be provided to the field inspector at the final inspection.

#### **Calgary Fire Department requirements:**

**Tent:** A structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner other than air or the contents it protects with sidewalls or drops on more than one side. Cooking appliances may be used in a tent with the following provisions:

- No “open flame” cooking appliances or barbeques are permitted in tents.
- Any cooking that may produce grease laden vapours is not permitted to be located inside a tent, unless the requirements of NFPA 96 (Ventilation Control & Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations) are met.
- Cooking appliances must be placed on a stable base to limit the risk of the appliance tipping.
- A 1 m clearance surrounding the cooking appliance shall be maintained for movement of public and staff.
- Where tents and air-supported structures are designed to accommodate more than 1 000 persons, a fire alarm and emergency communication system shall be provided. The type of system, and requirement for professional involvement on the design of the system must be documented and agreed with Calgary Fire Department prior to building permit issuance.

**Canopy:** A structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner other than air or the contents it protects and is open without sidewalls or drops on at least three sides of the structure. Cooking appliances may be used under a canopy with the following provisions:

- No “open flame” cooking appliances or barbeques are permitted in canopies.
- A maximum of two (2) cooking appliances that may produce grease laden vapours are permitted per canopy space measuring 3 x 3 meters.
- There shall be a vertical clearance of 1 m from the cooking appliance to the ceiling.
- Canopies used for cooking shall be a min. of 3 m from any other tent, building or non-cooking canopy (i.e., cooking canopies can be immediately adjacent to each other).

#### **Gas permit requirements:**

A gas permit is required when a propane container has a capacity of greater than 454 litres water capacity or when containers are manifolded together and the aggregate capacity exceeds 454 litres water capacity, e.g. - when horizontal tanks or “pigs” are connected and exceeds this capacity.



- All gas installations shall comply with the current edition of the Natural Gas and Propane Installation Code (B149.1) as well as the Propane Storage and Handling Code (B149.2).
- All appliances, accessories, and equipment used shall be installed according to the manufacturer's instructions and B149.1.
- 113.5 litre propane tanks shall be 3 m (9.8 ft) away from appliances (source of ignition).

#### **Electrical permit requirements:**

An electrical permit is required when:

- Temporary wiring (lighting & power) is attached to the steel structure.
- An electrical connection is supplied to the structure from a permanent power source.
- A generator is supplied that is required to be grounded.
- The steel structure is required to be bonded to ground.
- Receptacles in outdoor or damp locations are required to be protected by a ground fault circuit interrupter. This includes extension cords that might be plugged into a portable generator, portable power distribution equipment, or other source.

#### **Other requirements:**

- Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission, when special events licences are required.
- Alberta Health Services, when operating a temporary food establishment in conjunction with the event.
- The City of Calgary may require a Development Permit. The property owner/organizer is responsible for ensuring all bylaws and codes are adhered to. Visit [Temporary outdoor tents and canopies](#) for more information.

#### **Advisory:**

The building permit requirements within The City of Calgary for special events containing temporary tents and canopies will be categorized into the following three tiers:

- **Tier 1: Does not require a building permit.**
- **Tier 2: Is eligible for quick release building permit.**
- **Tier 3: A new commercial building permit is required.**

**Tier 1:** Tents, canopies and multiple clusters of tents and canopies, not exceeding 60m<sup>2</sup> in area, or are in conformance with all the conditions listed below, do not require a building permit.

- Not required to have professional involvement.
- Not intended to have an occupant load greater than 60 persons.
- Placed on site with a minimum clearance of 3 metres from any building, structure, flammable material or vegetation that may spread fire.
- Erected and dismantled under the supervision of an experienced, qualified person.
- Adequately braced, weighted or anchored to the ground as per the manufacturer's instructions or designed to withstand the elements against collapse or wind uplift.

- Not utilizing any open flame device, open flame cooking appliances or gas fired space heaters. Note: small electrical food warming appliances and small electrical space heaters are permitted.
- Labeled in conformance with CAN/ULC-S109 “Flame Tests of Flame-Resistant Fabrics and Films” including tarps or any coverings in the proximity.
- Erected for not more than four days (Land Use Bylaw requirement).

**Tier 2:** Tents, canopies and multiple clusters of tents and canopies not exceeding 120m<sup>2</sup> in area, or are in conformance with all the conditions listed below, are eligible for a quick release building permit.

- Not required to have professional involvement.
- Not intended to have an occupant load greater than 90 persons.
- Placed on site with a minimum clearance of 3 metres from any building, structure, flammable material or vegetation that may spread fire.
- Erected and dismantled under the supervision of an experienced, qualified person.
- Adequately braced, weighted or anchored to the ground as per the manufacturer’s instructions or designed to withstand the elements against collapse or wind uplift.
- Not utilizing any open flame device, open flame cooking appliances or gas fired space heaters. Note: small electrical food warming appliances and small electrical space heaters are permitted.
- Labeled in conformance with CAN/ULC-S109 “Flame Tests of Flame-Resistant Fabrics and Films” including tarps or any coverings in the proximity.
- Erected for not more than four days (Land Use Bylaw requirement).

**Tier 3:** Tents, canopies and multiple clusters of tents and canopies exceeding 120m<sup>2</sup> in area, are erected for more than four days, or do not meet any of the Tier 2 conditions listed above are required to apply for a commercial new building permit.

**The property owner and event organizer are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Safety Codes Act and its regulations.**

**Non-compliance with the Safety Codes Act is an offence and may result in significant penalties.**

This interpretation was accepted by the Codes and Standards Technical Interpretation Committee (CSTIC – March 18, 2025).

Chief Building Official  
The City of Calgary

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