



## **Building Advisory B19-008**

Revised March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Subject:** Temporary Outdoor Tents & Canopies.

### **Background:**

Special functions such as, Weddings; Sporting events; Charity runs and walks; Music Performances; Street Festivals, Parades; Block Parties, Film Industry productions and other special events are all subject to applicable safety regulations, bylaw rules and licensing requirements. These are intended to help keep citizens safe and ensure special functions are run responsibly and respectful of neighbours.

To encourage and support the film industry, attract businesses, and facilitate the operation of festivals & community events in Calgary, this advisory will provide an explanation and guidelines for when temporary canopy/tent structures used in public events may be exempt from a building permit or qualify for a quick release permit approval. The Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) is permitted to selectively apply the Building Code to temporary situations such as film industry or festival canopies, tents – including the requirement for a building permit which apply regardless of whether the event takes place on private or public land.

**The applicable Safety Regulations for this advisory, are under the provisions of:**  
**Sentence 1.1.1.3.(1).–Temporary Use.**

See below an excerpt from the explanatory Note A -1.1.1.3(1) to:

**The National Building Code Alberta Edition (NBC-AE) Division A - Sentence 1.1.1.3.(1)**

- 1) An authority having jurisdiction has 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 reasonable approach allows tents and canopies to be erected and occupied at Street Festivals, Carnivals, Sideshowes, Auctions, Religious Outdoor events and Film Industry Productions.

“Temporary” is usually thought of as being under three years.

There is an exemption to the building permit requirement under s. 6(3)(f)(ii) of the Alberta Permit Regulation where the tents comply with the following:

- The tents are more than 3 metres away from any other structure.
- The tent does not cover, and is not part of a group of tents that covers, more than 60 m<sup>2</sup>
- The tent does not contain any commercial cooking equipment.

This Advisory is issued by City of Calgary, Business and Building Safety Approvals. Advisories have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes, and regulations currently in effect. The City of Calgary accepts no responsibility to persons relying solely on this information.



## **Safety Regulations:**

Tents, canopies, stages, and other festival-type structures must conform to the NBC – AE and the Alberta Fire Code to ensure public safety, health, fire and structural safety, accessibility and performance requirements are met. The Electrical Code and the Plumbing & Gas Code also contain regulations and requirements for tents where there are cooking appliances, electricity, propane, or other fuel sources involved.

## **Building Permits:**

For residential tents, building permits are NOT required, as per the Alberta Safety Codes Act – Permit Regulation. The City will review residential use on a complaint basis for unsafe conditions.

## **Calgary Fire Department Requirements:**

**Tent:** A structure, enclosure or shelter constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except 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.

**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 barbeques are permitted under a canopy.
- 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).

## **PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES WITH JURISDICTION**

- Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission (when special events licences ++ are required)
- Alberta Health Services (when operating a temporary food establishment in conjunction with the event; see special events – organizer package and special events temporary food establishment – vendor package)

This Advisory is issued by City of Calgary, Business and Building Safety Approvals. Advisories have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes, and regulations currently in effect. The City of Calgary accepts no responsibility to persons relying solely on this information.



## Advisory:

The City of Calgary, Business and Building Safety Approvals interprets the NBC – AE, Fire Code requirements and the Alberta Permit Regulations as follows:

A public event containing multiple groups or clusters of temporary canopies or tents, will be categorized into the following three tiers:

- **Tier 1:** Multiple clusters of canopies/tents, with each cluster not exceeding 60m<sup>2</sup> and are in conformance to all of the conditions listed under Tier 1 below – **Do not require a Building Permit.**
- **Tier 2:** Multiple clusters of canopies/tents, with each cluster between 60m<sup>2</sup> to 120m<sup>2</sup> and are in conformance with all of the conditions listed under tier 2 below are eligible to apply for a **Quick Release Building Permit.**
- **Tier 3:** Multiple clusters of canopies and tents which accumulatively exceed 120m<sup>2</sup> will require **A full Building Permit review and approval as per the status quo.**

A development permit may be required.

## Conditions:

**Tier 1:** Tents/canopies under 60m<sup>2</sup> which meet all of the conditions below – **Do not require a Building Permit.**

When canopies or tents are erected for not more than four days, are more than 3 metres away from other structures, or other similar clusters of canopies or tents which are

- erected and dismantled under the supervision of an experienced, qualified person.
- not complex enough to warrant the requirement for professional involvement.
- 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.
- placed on site with a minimum clearance of 3 metres from any building, flammable material or vegetation that may spread fire.
- 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.
- not used for film industry sets or are not custom-built structures such as tents, stages or bleachers
- not intended to have an occupant load greater than 60 persons.

This Advisory is issued by City of Calgary, Business and Building Safety Approvals. Advisories have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes, and regulations currently in effect. The City of Calgary accepts no responsibility to persons relying solely on this information.



**Tier 2:** Multiple clusters of canopies/tents, when each cluster is between 60m<sup>2</sup> to 120m<sup>2</sup> and meet all of the criteria below are eligible for a **Quick Release Building Permit**.

When canopies or tents are erected more than 3 metres away from other structures, or other similar clusters of canopies or tents which are

- erected and dismantled under the supervision of an experienced, qualified person.
- not complex enough to warrant the requirement for professional involvement.
- 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.
- placed on site with a minimum clearance of 3 metres from any building, flammable material or vegetation that may spread fire.
- 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.
- not used for film industry sets or are not custom-built structures such as tents, stages or bleachers
- not intended to have an occupant load greater than 90 persons.

**Tier 3:** - In addition to the above Building Permit conditions, Tents & Canopies will require a full Building Permit review and approval, as well as any applicable **Trade Permits**.

**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).

**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.

This Advisory is issued by City of Calgary, Business and Building Safety Approvals. Advisories have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes, and regulations currently in effect. The City of Calgary accepts no responsibility to persons relying solely on this information.



### **Professional Involvement may be required when:**

At the sole discretion of the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), the installation is complex enough to warrant professional involvement the permit application will require the following:

- Drawing, sealed and reviewed by an Architect, who is registered to practice in the province of Alberta where an individual tent or multiple clusters of canopies and tents exceeds 300 m<sup>2</sup> in area and if the tents contain bleachers or sidewalls.
- Drawings must be sealed and reviewed by a professional engineer, who is registered and licensed to practice in the province of Alberta, where an individual tent or multiple clusters of canopies and tents exceeds 300 m<sup>2</sup> in area.
- If the platform of a stage is more than 1.2 meters higher than adjacent surface on any side or is more than 300 m<sup>2</sup> drawings for the stage must be sealed and reviewed by an architect and a professional engineer.
- If overhead structure is used or intended to be used in conjunction with a stage or a tent drawings must be sealed and reviewed by a professional engineer.
- If the size or complexity of a project gives rise to special safety concerns, all drawings may be required to be sealed by an architect and engineer, who is registered and licensed to practice in the province of Alberta.

The property owner or event organizer is responsible for all safety codes compliance. Noncompliance with the Safety Codes Act is an offence under the act and may result in significant penalties.

This interpretation was accepted by the Codes and Standards Technical Interpretation Committee (CSTIC) meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Manager, Business & Building Safety Approvals  
Manager, Building Safety and Inspection Services  
Development, Business & Building Services**

This Advisory is issued by City of Calgary, Business and Building Safety Approvals. Advisories have no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various bylaws, codes, and regulations currently in effect. The City of Calgary accepts no responsibility to persons relying solely on this information.