



Central Douglas Fire & Rescue

Division of Fire Prevention

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SPECIAL EVENT REQUIREMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Public events that bring together large groups of people can come with safety risks. Crowded spaces, unfamiliar attendees, and sometimes low lighting can all increase the chance of accidents or emergencies. The good news is that these risks can be reduced with careful planning and strong safety measures.

Any event held within the Central Douglas Fire & Rescue Authority (CDF&R) service area must prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of everyone involved—this includes staff, volunteers, guests, and anyone else affected by the event. Whether you're a student planning a school event, a venue manager, or part of an outside organization, you are responsible for making sure your event is safe.

It's important to start thinking about safety at the same time you begin planning the rest of your event. Safety isn't something that should be added later—it needs to be part of the process from the beginning.

Public events come in all shapes and sizes, from fairs, fireworks, and car races to graduation ceremonies, trade shows, concerts, and more. While each event is different, all must meet certain fire and life safety standards. The standards that apply may vary depending on the type and size of the event, but safety planning is always required.

Purpose: This guide is designed to help event organizers and those involved in planning understand the rules outlined in the Oregon Fire Code (OFC) and other relevant safety regulations. Following these rules will help make sure your event is safe for everyone who attends, works, or participates.

Scope: The fire and life safety rules in this guide apply to **all events**—both indoor and outdoor—held in public spaces within the Central Douglas Fire & Rescue Authority (CDF&R) service area. These rules must be followed by everyone involved, including fair organizers, schools, event planners, vendors, food booths, exhibitors, contractors, and any other individuals assisting with the event.

Who's Responsible

- **Event Sponsor:** The main person or group in charge of the event is responsible for making sure it's safe. They must select someone to serve as the Event Safety Representative, who will be responsible for all safety matters during planning and the event itself.
- **Property Owner:** The owner of the building or property is responsible for addressing any safety issues or code violations.
- **Occupants** (such as vendors or organizers): If a vendor, exhibitor, or event organizer creates a dangerous situation that breaks the rules, they are responsible for rectifying it.
- **Fire Marshal:** The Fire Marshal has the legal authority to enforce fire safety rules and can create policies and procedures to apply those rules clearly.

Codes and Rules This Guide Follows

- Oregon Fire Code (2022 Edition)
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards: 10, 1123, and 1126
- Oregon Revised Statutes: 480.110 to 480.165
- Oregon Administrative Rules: 837-012-0700 to 837-012-0970

Definitions

Approved: When this guide says something must be “approved,” it means it must be approved in writing by the Fire Marshal.

Exceptions: Any exceptions to the fire code rules must also be granted in writing by the Fire Marshal. If you don't have written approval, you must follow the complete rules as listed in the code.

SECTION 1 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1.1 Purpose: This section outlines general fire safety rules applicable to all events. For more specific requirements, see Sections 2 through 10.

1.2 Permits: You may need a permit from the Fire Marshal to hold your event or perform certain activities.

- Permit fees and safety requirements must be met before you get the permit.
- Contact the CDF&R Fire Prevention Division to find out what kind of permit you need, what safety steps are required, and what the fees are.

1.3 Inspections: The Fire Marshal may inspect your event or facility to make sure it meets safety requirements.

- Because many events are short-term and involve lots of people, any safety violations must be fixed immediately.
- If you don't correct a violation right away, the Fire Marshal may stop the event, close displays or booths, or even shut down the entire building.
- Fines or penalties may also apply under the Oregon Fire Code or state law.

1.4 Standby Personnel and Crowd Managers: For certain events, such as fairs, concerts, or large tents, the Fire Marshal may require you to provide trained safety personnel to assist in protecting the public. This decision depends on the number of attendees and/or the type of activity or performance.

Requirements include:

- **Crowd managers:** You must have at least one trained crowd manager for every 250 people.
- **Duties of standby personnel:**
 1. Before and during the event, be vigilant for any fire hazards or potential problems.
 2. Take prompt action to extinguish small fires and assist people in evacuating if necessary.
 3. Be able to call 911 and communicate effectively with other staff members.
 4. Know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, and fire alarm/sprinkler systems.

1.5 No Smoking: Smoking is not allowed inside or within 10 feet of doors, windows, barns, tents, booths, or any building used for the event.

- Visible **NO SMOKING** signs must be posted.
- Designated smoking areas are allowed if they are:
 - On a surface that won't catch fire
 - Equipped with sturdy, non-flammable ashtrays
 - Approved by the Fire Marshal

1.6 Open Flame (Candles, Torches, etc.): Open flames—like candles or torches—used for decoration, ceremonies, or demonstrations must follow these rules:

1. Flaming devices that use gasoline, alcohol, or propane are not allowed for decoration.
2. Candles or any open flame are not allowed in areas with large groups of people, unless approved by the Fire Marshal.
3. No open flames are allowed near flammable items, such as tablecloths, displays, or merchandise.
4. Open flames are not allowed where people are standing, in aisles, or near exits.
5. Candles must meet these conditions:
 - Be in a non-flammable holder that won't tip over easily (or will go out if tipped).

- Any shades used must be fireproof and securely attached to the frame.
 - Candelabras must be stable and not easy to knock over.
 - No passing of lit handheld candles from person to person.
6. The Fire Marshal must approve the use of torches or handheld flame devices.
 7. For cooking with open flames, see Section 4: Cooking.

1.7 Decorative Materials: All fabrics or materials used for decoration must be fire-resistant or treated with an approved fire retardant.

- If treated, provide documentation showing what product was used, when it was applied, and how.
- Regular tablecloths, merchandise, or displays are not considered "decorations."
- Any wood decorations under ¼ inch thick must also be fire-resistant.

1.8 Fire Extinguishers:

- Fire extinguishers must be available every 75 feet.
- The Fire Marshal may require an extinguisher for each booth or display, depending on the layout.
- Requirements:
 1. Minimum extinguisher rating: 2-A:10-B:C (multi-use type)
 2. For cooking areas, see Section 4
 3. Staff must know where extinguishers are and how to use them
 4. All extinguishers must be:
 - Serviced within the past 12 months
 - Inspected within the past 30 days
 5. It must be easy to see and reach
 6. Must be mounted properly, with the handle no more than 5 feet above the floor

1.9 Exits and Aisles: To ensure a safe exit in an emergency:

1. Each booth or stand must have at least one exit that doesn't pass through another enclosed space.
2. Aisles and exits must stay clean; no easels, signs, tables, or other objects can block them.
 - Keep 10 feet of clearance on both sides of exit doors.
3. Exit doors must not be hidden behind curtains or used for storage.
4. Exit doors must open easily with a single motion and remain unlocked throughout the event.
5. Aisles and exits must be well-lit during evening or night events.
6. Exit signs are required when:
 - There are two or more exits
 - Occupancy is more than 50 people

7. Minimum widths:

- Aisles near booths with 50 or fewer people: 36 inches wide, 80 inches tall
- Aisles between booths or displays: At least 44 inches wide

8. Main walkways should be:

- 8 feet wide for smaller events
- 10 feet wide for large events

9. Max travel distance to exit:

- 200 feet
- 250 feet in buildings with sprinklers
- 400 feet in open-air seating areas

1.10 Occupant Load (Number of People Allowed): The Fire Marshal will determine the maximum number of people allowed in each space based on its intended use.

- Signs showing the maximum capacity must be posted as required.
- No overcrowding is allowed under any circumstances.

1.11 Tables and Chairs (Seating Layout):

1. The furthest seat in a row should not be more than 30 feet from an aisle or exit path.
2. For rows of chairs:
 - There must be at least 12 inches between the front of one row and the back of the next for up to 14 chairs.
 - For more than 14 chairs in a row, add 0.3 inches of space per extra chair (up to a 22-inch maximum).
 - Aisles between chair rows must be at least 48 inches wide.
3. If more than 200 chairs are used in one area, they must be:
 - Attached to the floor, or
 - Connected in groups of three or more
4. For tables:
 - Square banquet tables must be:
 - 31 inches apart (one side seating)
 - 50 inches apart (both sides seating)
 - Round tables must be at least 6 feet apart (edge to edge)

1.12 Trash and Waste Disposal: To reduce fire risk, events must have the proper trash containers and keep areas clean:

1. Use non-combustible (won't catch fire) containers and place them where they're easy to use.
2. Empty trash containers at least once per day, or more often if they start to overflow.

3. Trash cans larger than 40 gallons must:
 - Be made of fire-safe material
 - Have an approved lid
4. Trash containers larger than 55 gallons must be at least 5 feet away from tents or any flammable structures.
5. Do not place trash bins:
 - Near exits or exit paths
 - Under open stairways
 - Next to anything that generates heat
6. Large dumpsters (over 1.5 cubic yards) must not be placed:
 - Inside buildings
 - Within 5 feet of building walls, windows, or roof overhangs

1.13 Generators: Generators must be set up and used safely:

1. Never refuel a generator while it's running.
2. Store fuel safely at least 50 feet away from tents, booths, or structures.
3. Keep generators behind fencing or barriers to prevent public access.
4. Do not use generators inside buildings or tents.
5. Keep generators away from exits or exit routes.
6. Generators must be at least 20 feet away from tents or flammable structures.
7. A fire extinguisher rated 2-A:10-B:C must be within 75 feet of all generators.

1.14 Fire Alarm Systems: If your event location has a fire alarm system:

1. It must be inspected and serviced every year. Keep proof of inspection.
2. Fire alarm panels must be easily accessible and clearly labeled.
3. Don't block or cover any fire alarm sounds or strobe lights with decorations or displays.

1.15 Fire Sprinkler Systems: If a building has sprinklers:

1. The system must be serviced annually, with documentation provided.
2. The location of the sprinkler shut-off valves must be clearly labeled.
3. Keep all items at least 18 inches below the sprinkler heads.
4. Do not hang or attach anything to any part of the sprinkler system.

1.16 Fire Hydrants & Fire Department Connections (FDCs):

1. Keep at least 3 feet of clear space around hydrants and FDCs—no fences, cars, trash, or plants blocking access.
2. Do not park within 10 feet of a fire hydrant or FDC (this is against Oregon law: ORS 811.550(16)).
3. Fire hydrants must be flow tested and serviced annually. Proof must be available.

4. Hydrants and FDCs must be marked as directed by the Fire Marshal.

1.17 Vehicles, Boats, and RV Displays: If you're displaying vehicles indoors:

- You must get Fire Marshal approval first.
- Rules for vehicles on display:
 1. Gas tanks must be less than $\frac{1}{4}$ full or have no more than 5 gallons of fuel, whichever is less.
 2. Fuel caps must be locked or sealed (tape is acceptable).
 3. Propane (LP) and compressed natural gas (CNG) tanks must be empty.
 4. No refueling inside a building or tent.
 5. Disconnect the battery (hot wire only) and tape the cable end to prevent reconnection.

1.18 Stages: All stages and platforms used for performances must be shown on the event site plan and approved by the Fire Marshal.

1.19 Site Plans: If required by the Fire Marshal, you must submit a detailed site plan for review and approval. It must include:

1. Fire access roads and fire lanes (with measurements)
2. Parking layout
3. Property boundaries
4. Locations of fire hydrants, fire department connections, and standpipes
5. Fire alarm panel locations and alarm coverage areas
6. All permanent buildings and structures
7. All stages and platforms
8. All temporary structures (tents, booths, food trucks, etc.)
9. Fencing, cages, and barriers
10. Aisles, exits, and emergency exits
11. Exit signs and lighting
12. Table and seating layout with spacing and aisle widths
13. Vehicle display layout (if applicable)
14. Type, size, and location of fire extinguishers
15. Locations of propane or compressed gas tanks
16. Locations of dumpsters and trash bins
17. Smoking areas (must be approved)
18. Address labeling or building identification if using large tents or structures

SECTION 2 – FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCESS

2.1 Access Requirements

1. The Fire Marshal must approve fire access roads and fire lanes.
2. Access roads must stay open and clear throughout the event.
3. The Fire Marshal will determine minimum dimensions based on the event layout.
4. Event organizers or property managers are responsible for keeping access routes clear and unobstructed.
5. No parking is allowed in marked fire lanes or No Parking zones.

SECTION 3 – TENTS, CANOPIES, AND MEMBRANE STRUCTURES

3.1 Definitions

- **Tent:** A structure made of fabric, supported by poles or other means (not air).
- **Booth/Stand:** A temporary structure or trailer used to sell food, goods, or services.
- **Membrane Structure:** A large, flexible structure supported by air, cables, or frames (not considered a tent).

3.2 Flame Resistance

- All fabric used in tents or booths must be fire-resistant or treated with flame retardant.
- Tarps that are not treated cannot be used while the event is open to the public.
- Tents must have labels showing size, type, and fire rating.

3.3 Tent and Canopy Spacing

1. Tents must be at least 20 feet from buildings, roads, or property lines.
 - This includes ropes and tie-downs.
2. A 12-foot fire break must surround each tent unless tents are joined together.
3. Tents used for cooking must be at least 20 feet away from non-cooking tents or buildings.
4. Cooking equipment must be 10 feet from exits or flammable materials.
5. Tents are not allowed inside buildings unless approved by the Fire Marshal.
6. Sleeping in tents is not allowed without approval.

3.4 Exits from Tents

- The exit layout depends on how many people are inside the tent.
- Maximum distance to an exit: 100 feet
- Number and size of exits:
 - Up to 10 people: 1 exit, at least 72 inches wide
 - 11–199 people: 2 exits, each 72 inches wide

- 200–499 people: 3 exits, each 96 inches wide
- More than 499: Contact the Fire Marshal for specific requirements
- Exit signs must be provided in tents requiring two or more exits.
 - Signs must have 12-inch letters and be lit when the tent is occupied.
- No tent ropes or supports should cross exit areas lower than 8 feet high.

3.5 Combustible Materials in Tents

- Do not store hay, straw, or similar materials inside or within 30 feet of a cooking or assembly tent.
 - Exception: One-day supply feeding animals.
- Damp sawdust or shavings may be used in public performances or exhibits.
- Do not store combustible items under bleachers or stands.

SECTION 4 – COOKING & WARMING OF FOOD

4.1 General: Cooking involves using various cooking devices, including open flame cooktops, fryers, skillets, woks, microwaves, ovens, and barbecues. All cooking equipment must be installed and used following the manufacturer's instructions.

4.2 Food Warming: Warming food with warming trays, open flames, hot plates, Sterno cans, or similar devices (not classified as cooking equipment) must be approved by the Fire Marshal.

4.3 Exits: All food vendor booths or stands must have at least one staff exit that is at least 10 feet away from any cooking equipment, and this exit must be approved by the Fire Marshal.

4.4 Location: Portable food vendors in tents or canopies must be at least 20 feet away from amusement rides or devices. Outdoor cooking that produces sparks or grease smoke is prohibited within 20 feet of a tent or canopy.

4.5 Fire Extinguishers and Covers: Each cooking booth, indoors or outdoors, must have:

- At least one accessible 4-A:40-B:C rated fire extinguisher. More may be needed so no one has to travel more than 30 feet to reach one.
- A portable Class “K” fire extinguisher if cooking produces grease or smoke vapors.
- When deep frying with oil more than ¼ inch deep, a metal or fire-resistant lid that fully covers the cooking area must be nearby.

4.6 Ventilation: Cooking devices indoors, in trailers, or combustible booths that produce grease smoke must have an approved hood and fire suppression system, or a self-closing lid or approved self-extinguishing feature.

All ventilation systems must meet the Oregon Mechanical Specialty Code and be cleaned both before and during the event to prevent grease buildup.

SECTION 5 – HEATING

5.1 Heating Equipment: Heating devices include electric or fuel-burning heaters, portable or permanent, with open or concealed heating elements. Requirements:

- Chimney pipes and vents must be protected to prevent burns and kept at least 12 inches from combustible materials.
- Heating equipment must be installed following Oregon Electrical or Mechanical Specialty Codes and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Maintain clearance between heaters and combustibles as per the manufacturer's instructions or at least 36 inches if no guidance is provided.
- Portable space heaters with open flames are not allowed in tents, canopies, booths, or similar setups.
- Patio or umbrella heaters (gas or electric) are permitted outdoors, provided they maintain proper clearance and are secured against tipping. Indoor use of these heaters in open-air settings may be permitted on a case-by-case basis by the Fire Code Official.

SECTION 6 – LPG, COMPRESSED, AND FLAMMABLE FUELS

6.1 Compressed Flammable Gases: This includes propane, butane, natural gas, acetylene, and similar gases. Requirements:

- Storing and using LPG inside buildings, portable concessions, or tents is prohibited.
- LPG tanks must be kept outside of buildings, booths, concessions, or tents.
- Exception: LPG tanks 5 gallons or smaller may be inside open-air canopies, but no sidewalls or barriers can trap gas vapors.
- LPG tanks must be at least 10 feet away from combustible plants and trash bins.
- Tanks must be at least 20 feet away from flames, heat, or sparks. Propane cannot be used in basements.
- Tanks must be secured upright to prevent tipping, using brackets, chains, or other approved methods.
- Regulators must be attached properly with vents facing down and away from structures.
- Fuel lines going into booths must be protected from damage.
- LPG tanks must be filled before the event opens to the public.

6.2 Flammable Liquids: Flammable liquids like gasoline, kerosene, paint thinner, and motor oil must not be stored, dispensed, or used inside buildings, booths, or tents.

SECTION 7 – ELECTRICAL

7.1 General: All electrical equipment must:

1. Be listed or labeled and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

2. Only be used if in good working condition. Modified or damaged equipment is prohibited.
3. Ensure all junction boxes and wiring splices are properly covered; open boxes or splices are not permitted.
4. Install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) in outdoor public or wet areas on permanent wiring circuits. If not installed permanently, portable GFCI cords or power strips must be used.
5. Maintain a clear working space at least 30 inches wide, 36 inches deep, and 78 inches high in front of all electrical panels. No storage is allowed within this space.

7.2 Appliances and Lighting

1. Household appliances are not intended for commercial use.
2. Clamp-type lights and appliances must be securely fastened to prevent movement or falling.

7.3 Extension Cords – Use

1. Extension cords are not a substitute for permanent wiring.
2. Extension cords may only be used with portable appliances.
3. Extension cords must plug directly into an approved outlet and serve only one appliance, except for approved multi-plug extension cords.

7.4 Extension Cords – Location: Extension cords may not be attached to structures, run through walls, ceilings, floors, under doors or floor coverings, or exposed to damage. Cords in public areas with foot traffic must be protected physically.

7.5 Ampacity and Conductor Sizes

1. Extension cords must have an ampacity equal to or greater than the appliance's rating, with a minimum of 15 amps.
2. Extension cords must be at least 14-gauge, three-conductor, with polarized or grounded plugs and receptacles.

7.6 Power Taps (Multi-Plug Adapters)

1. Only approved and listed multi-plug adapters are allowed. Adapters without visible listing marks are prohibited.
2. Power taps (fused power strips) must be listed and have built-in overcurrent protection.
3. Power tap cords and outlets must be polarized or grounded.
4. Power taps must plug directly into a permanent receptacle and cannot be chained together.

7.7 Temporary Wiring (Other Than Extension Cords)

1. Temporary wiring requires an electrical permit.
2. Temporary wiring may be used for up to 90 days.
3. Temporary wiring attached to structures must comply with Oregon Electrical Specialty Code installation methods.

SECTION 8 – FENCED EVENTS (BEER GARDENS AND CONCERTS)

8.1 Fenced Events

1. Fenced areas with more than 50 occupants must have at least two exits; more exits may be required based on occupant load.
2. Exits cannot be chained or locked and must open easily from inside the fenced area.
3. Exits must be clearly marked with exit signs.
4. Emergency and egress lighting may be required at night or after sunset.
5. Exit doors and gates must swing in the direction of exit travel.

SECTION 9 – LIVESTOCK BARNES AND ARENAS

9.1 Barns and Arenas

1. Livestock areas cannot be used for sleeping unless approved by the Fire Code Official.
2. Parking of motorized vehicles, campers, or trailers inside livestock barns is prohibited.
3. Exit doors and egress paths must be kept clear at all times to allow animal movement.
4. Portable heaters are not permitted where hay, straw, or other combustible materials are present.
5. Heat lamps used for newborn animals must be secured and protected in a manner approved by the manufacturer.
6. Only a one-day supply of straw, hay, or similar combustibles is allowed on-site.
7. Electric equipment such as shears, blowers, fans, and vacuums must be grounded, polarized, in good condition, and used according to their listing, especially in wet or dusty areas.

SECTION 10 – GUN SHOWS

Gun shows must comply with the following:

1. Indoor storage and display of black powder, smokeless powder, smokeless propellants, and small arms ammunition shall follow the requirements of NFPA 495.

SECTION 11 – FIREWORKS DISPLAY

Fireworks displays, including proximate audience shows and pyrotechnical special effects for motion pictures, television, theater, and entertainment events, must comply with the following:

11.1 Display Operator Certification

1. General and limited fireworks display operators must be certified by the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM).
2. Special effects displays currently do not require a certified operator.

11.2 Permits

1. Permits for public fireworks displays are required from OSFM and include:
 - General (Division 1.3G, 1.4G, and special effects fireworks)
 - Limited (Division 1.4G only)
 - Special Effects Display (special effects fireworks only)
2. Each date and/or time of display requires a separate permit, except for exact consecutive special effects displays such as theater performances.
3. Public display permit applications must include:
 - A site diagram showing the discharge location, mortar pipe details (size, height, width, staking), spectator clearance and parking areas, nearby buildings, roads, combustibles, overhead obstructions, and utilities.
 - A written safety plan detailing natural vegetation abatement, crowd and smoke control measures, standby personnel and equipment, firing procedures, and steps for malfunction events.
4. Permit applications for proximate audience displays must include similar diagrams and safety plans tailored to the closer proximity of the audience.
5. The public display of “Gas Mines” and “Ghost Mines” special effects is strictly prohibited in the Central Douglas Fire & Rescue Authority (CDF&R) service area.

11.3 Approved Displays: Approved fireworks displays must:

- Use only approved Division 1.3G, 1.4G, and 1.4S fireworks.
- Be handled by a certified and competent display operator (OSFM and/or BATFE).
- Be arranged and fired so as not to endanger people or property.

11.4 Fireworks Storage at Display Site

- Fireworks must not be left unattended once delivered to the site.
- Display operators must inspect shells upon delivery; damaged or wet shells must be set aside and not fired.
- Aerial shells must fit mortars properly; shells that don’t fit shall not be used.

- Damaged or dud shells must be returned to the supplier or destroyed according to supplier and code instructions (minor repairs and electric igniter attachments allowed).
- Shells must be separated by type and size before the display, except when electrically fired or preloaded into mortars.
- Display fireworks stored temporarily on site must be kept in ready boxes, upwind and at least 25 feet from mortar locations.
- Mortars must be positioned so shells launch away from spectators and over fallout areas; they must never point toward the audience. Mortars must be inspected for damage before use.
- Aerial shells must be carried by the shell body and loaded carefully by the fuse end.

11.5 Safety and Post-Display Procedures

- If the Fire Code Official or operator identifies a hazardous condition, the display must stop immediately until the hazard is resolved.
- After the show, the fallout area must be inspected for unexploded shells before the public is allowed access. For nighttime displays, a thorough inspection must be completed at first light.
- Any malfunctioning shells found must not be handled until at least 15 minutes after firing, then soaked in water for 5 minutes before being disposed of safely, as per the manufacturer's instructions.