



Tacoma Fire Department
Fire Prevention Bureau 253.591.5740
FAX Number 253.594.7943
3471 S. 35th St. Tacoma, WA 98409
www.tacomafiredepartment.org

Special Events – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: *When do I need to get a Temporary Place of Assembly permit?*

A: When one of the following occurs:

1. You are operating a large carnival, fair or festival (+100 participants)
2. When the venue in which your event takes place is not already a Place of Assembly
3. When the Assembly venue in which your event takes place has a temporary change of use or type, a temporary change in type of activity, a temporary increase in occupancy load, a temporary change in routes of exit from the venue, or a temporary introduction of an additional hazard, (e.g. candles, display of vehicles, performances that include pyrotechnics or fire.)

Q: *How do I get a permit application?*

A: You may obtain a permit application by one of the following methods:

1. Access Tacoma Fire Department web site and download the forms
2. Come to the Tacoma Fire Department Prevention Office at 3471 S. 35th St.
3. You may call the Fire Prevention Office at (253) 591-5740 and request a permit application be mailed or faxed to you.
4. The Fire Prevention Office is open, Monday -Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (Also see: Permit Application Fees)

Note: Inspectors will not collect permit fees or permit applications in the field.

Q: *How often do I have to flameproof my fabric?*

A: A certificate of flame resistance is valid for one (1) year when an item has been professionally treated and maintained as instructed. Tags indicating a product is inherently flame resistant are valid for the length of time specified on the tag by the manufacturer. (Also see: [Flame Proofing & Combustible Storage Information Bulletin](#))

Q: *Can I flameproof my fabric or display materials myself?*

A: No. Treating the item(s) yourself is no longer acceptable to meet the standards for Flame Proofing. You must have a professional treat your materials.

Q: *When do I need a tent permit?*

A: Tents over 200 square feet in area (e.g. greater than 10' x 20') and canopies over 400 square feet in area (e.g. greater than 20' x 20') require Fire Department permits. A tent is defined as a membrane structure with two or more sidewalls. If it has only one sidewall or no sidewalls, it is considered a canopy. (Also see: [Tent & Canopy Information Bulletin](#))

Q: *What kind of heater can I use in my tent?*

A: "Mushroom type" propane heaters (e.g. upright heaters with a self-contained propane fuel source) and any other heaters designed so that the propane source is located inside the tent or canopy are prohibited. Heaters that operate with the propane fuel source located outside of the tent or canopy and the heated air is pumped into the structure (e.g. salamander heaters) are allowed but require a Fire Department permit. Heaters using flammable/combustible liquids (e.g. diesel) as a fuel source are not allowed inside the tent or canopy. If they are placed outside the tent or canopy a separate Fire Department permit is required. Electric heaters may be operated inside a tent and do not require a Fire Department permit.

Note: This is also the case when using any portable propane heaters inside any Place of Assembly.

Q: *I need more propane for my cooking operation than my permit allows. What can I do?*

A: Call the Fire Marshal's Office at (253) 591-5740 and request to speak to a representative of the Special Event Section. There are several criteria in the Fire Code, which if you are able to meet them, may allow you to increase the quantities of propane you are permitted to use for your cooking operation.

Q: *My setup isn't exactly like the floor plans I sent in along with my permit application. Is that a problem?*

A: Your permit is contingent upon meeting the conditions attached to it. In this case the floor plans attached to the permit constitute a portion of the permit conditions. Any variation from them invalidates the permit. You may however call the Fire Marshal's Office at (253)591-5740 and ask to speak to a representative of the Special Events Section with regard to changes you would like to make to your floor plans. These changes will be considered by the Special Events Section prior to the event you are planning, right up until the day of the event. These changes may or may not be approved.

Q: *I didn't know that needed to have a permit until today and my event is scheduled for tonight. Can I still have my event?*

A: An inspector from the Special Events Section of the Fire Marshal's Office is required to approve your event. If this is the first time you have applied for a permit AND an inspector is available, we will try to accommodate you as best we can. This is not a guarantee that your event will be approved. If an inspector from the Special Events Section is available to look at the plans and/or the site for the event, all pertinent Fire Code requirements must still be met before the permit can be approved. Applications received 3 business days or less prior to the event may not be processed and the permit not issued.

Q: *I want to display a vehicle at my event. Are there any restrictions?*

A: Yes, a liquid or gas-fueled vehicle or equipment can be displayed in a Place of Assembly under the following conditions:

- Maximum fuel: 1/4 of a tank or 5 gallons whichever is less.
- All gas covers shall be taped or have a locking type gas cap.
- Battery cables shall be disconnected and taped.
- Vehicles with no fuel gauge or with broken fuel gauge shall not be allowed on the event floor and shall not be displayed, unless a representative of the Fire Marshal's Office gives prior approval.

For more information, please call the Fire Prevention Office at (253) 591-5740 Monday-Friday, 8:00am - 5:00pm, and ask to speak to a representative of the Special Events Section.