

CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH

Fire Prevention Bureau

Special Event Requirements

Revised: 8/17/2023

IMPORTANT PLEASE READ

Conditional Use Permit Requirements

The issuance of a conditional use permit (CUP) associated with a special event within the City of Virginia Beach does not absolve the applicant of his/or her responsibility to obtain other required permits, or inspection before the event opens. CUP's are still required to contact any City department that may be impacted by the event, especially Fire, Police, and EMS.

Fire Prevention Bureau
2408 Courthouse Drive, Building 21
Virginia Beach, 23456
www.vbgov.com/fire-prevention
Office 757-385-4228
Fax 757-385-5676

Table of Contents

General Information	2
Phone Numbers	2
Conditional Use Permit Requirements	3
Application Information	4
Tent Construction	6
Tent Location	6
Extinguishers	7
Food Trucks, Trailers, and Stands.....	7
Portable Cooking Equipment	8
Butane and Propane Equipment.....	9
Charcoal Barbeque Cooking	9
Deep Fat Frying	9
Housekeeping	9
Electrical and Generators	10
Generators	10
Electrical.....	10
Candles and Open Flames	11
Candles.....	11
Bonfires, Recreational Fires, and Portable Outdoor Fireplaces.....	11
Fireworks, Pyro, and Flaming Effects	13
Decorative Materials.....	13
Platforms.....	14
Appendix A – Tent Distance Visual Guide.....	16

Fire Prevention Planning Guide for Special Events

This guide outlines fire and life safety requirements found in the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (VSFPC). The Fire Prevention Bureau (FPB) has created this guide to help promoters and organizers better understand fire code regulations, minimize violations, and limit last minute disruptions. The Virginia Beach Fire Department is committed to providing safe environments to anyone who attends special events throughout the City of Virginia Beach while assisting the event world in meeting their vision.

This guide summarizes the majority of fire safety requirements that promoters and event organizers will encounter when planning an activity. This guide contains fire code requirements, Fire Department permit information, and other department's requirements who are involved in the process as well. Please make sure you have filled out all applications and obtained all required permits prior to the start of your events.

Resort Management Office (757) 385-4800

<http://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/sga/resort/specialevents/Pages/default.aspx>

Outdoor events need to check with the Special Events and Film Office (SEAFO) to see if the activity meets the requirements for a SEAFO permit.

Parks and Recreation (757) 385-1100

<http://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/parks-recreation/Pages/default.aspx>

All events that take place at any City of Virginia Beach parks (except the oceanfront), recreation centers, and in areas around the Sports Plex /Princess Anne Athletic Complex should contact Parks and Recreation (P&R) regarding rentals and necessary permits.

Permits and Inspections (757) 385-4211

<http://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/planning/permits-inspections/Pages/default.aspx>

Tents over 900sqft need a permit from both Fire Prevention and Permits & Inspections (P&I). Amusement devices, inflatables, platforms, structures, stages, and anything that is fabricated on site that will house or support people will need a permit from P&I.

Fire Prevention (757) 385-4228

www.vbgov.com/fire-prevention

Fire Prevention requires permits for activities and performs inspections. Tents over 900Sqft, vehicle displays, fireworks, pyrotechnics, flaming effects, and fires used for commercial purposes or in a public setting require a permit and an inspection from the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Any Fire Code special event questions should be directed to the Fire Prevention Bureau.

APPLICATIONS

All event applications with incomplete or conflicting information will result in the application being denied until corrections have been made. Applicants must coordinate with the appropriate City office, i.e. RMO or Parks and Recreation to resubmit the required information in order to the event permit to be approved.

FOOD VENDOR FORMS

Food vendor forms must be filled out by the food vendor or the application will not be considered completed. Food vendors are responsible for following all regulations set forth by all city and state departments. Applicants that have deviated from their submitted information may be denied based on fire code requirements or state regulations.

SITE PLANS

All applications shall be accompanied by a legible site plan with computerized and measured drawing. Illegible site plans will result in the application being returned to the applicant. Please review the criteria in the application and include all applicable information on the site plan. Attached is an example site plan to further help with identifying key objects for any event site plan. Things to include but not limited to:

- 1) Location and width of all platforms, stages, structures, exit doors, fences, barricades, aisles in large exhibitor areas, and the main event aisle ways
- 2) **Entrances, exits, and emergency exits must be clearly indicated on all site maps for access controlled areas.**
 - a. The material used as a barrier must be clearly identified on the site plan
 - b. Occupancy loads will be set by the Fire Prevention Bureau for access controlled areas based on the activity in that space
- 3) Location, size, and identification number of cooking tents/booths, vendor tents/booths, and other display spaces
- 4) Seating areas: including stools, booth seats, table and chairs
 - a. This includes interior layouts of tents used for assembly purposes
- 5) Location of LPG (propane), gasoline, diesel, compressed gasses, and hazardous materials
- 6) Location of fire access roads and apparatus access points
- 7) Roads seeking approval for closure during the event and what type of barricades will be used
- 8) The location of vehicles (including boats and motor craft) shall be indicated on the site plan. Indoor vehicle displays shall adhere to the following:
 - a. Vehicles must have ¼ of fuel or 5 gallons, whichever is less.
 - b. Vehicles must have the batteries disconnected, unless there is a cutoff switch severing power from the battery, or there are sensitive electronics that cannot lose power.
 - c. Keys must be surrendered to responsible party after load in. Vehicles shall not be started or moved during event.
- 9) Vehicles must be located 20 feet from cooking areas and 10 feet from non- cooking areas.

PUBLIC SAFETY PLANS

Not all events will require a public safety plan, but large events that will place strain on public resources will be required to have a plan for Police, Fire, EMS, and other city agencies to mitigate hazards that may result at that event. Security, crowd management, equipment placement, and vehicle access are all things that should be included and considered in a public safety plan. When filling out the application, entering “call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency” is not a proper safety plan. Some things to consider:

- Communication – how are personnel on site communicating issues?
- Crowd management – how will the public ingress and egress throughout the venue?
 - Crowd size will determine if crowd managers are needed per the Fire Code
- Site access – how are emergency responders entering the site, do they have enough access, i.e. width for parking and setup of equipment?
- Traffic – where is the public and staff parking and what routes are being used?
- Security – areas that will require personnel to safeguard
- Fire hazards/emergencies
- Medical emergencies

Questions about public safety plans should be directed to the Fire Prevention Bureau 757-385-4228.

TENT AND VENDOR INSPECTIONS

Event organizers are required to provide an inspection date and time for Fire Prevention personnel to inspect equipment, tents, and other items for approval. It is the responsibility of the event organizer to notify RMO of any scheduling changes regarding the event area. If a vendor is not available for inspection at the scheduled date and time, they will not be approved to operate. The event organizer is responsible to notify vendors of scheduled inspection times and dates.

Event organizers are required to set a tent inspection date and time on the event application. Tents requiring a FMO and P&I permit shall submit an interior site plan clearly indicating all activities taking place under the tent. Tent permit applications that are not received within 14 days of the event will be denied.

All vendors need to be aware that the Fire Prevention Bureau only inspects per the Fire Code, you will not be approved to start cooking until all city, state, and other agencies have approved your operation.

Venues that have obtained a conditional use permit (CUP) are not exempt from a vendor or site inspection from the Fire Prevention Bureau. All vendors and event activities are required to meet the minimums of state and local codes.

EVENT REQUIREMENTS

TENT CONSTRUCTION

- Tents over nine-hundred square feet (900) are required to have a permit issued from the Department of Permits and Inspections and the Fire Prevention Bureau. Please contact the FPB office to fill out an application and a permit will be issued once the tent has been inspected.
- The Permits and Inspection permit is required to be on site to receive the FPB tent permit.
 - All tents over nine-hundred square feet (900) are required to submit an interior site plan.
 - Tents under nine-hundred square feet (900) and under may be required to submit an interior site plan.
- Exit openings shall be maintained
- A physical barrier must separate all cooking activities from the public
- All tents used for cooking shall meet flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701.
 - Membranes shall have a permanently fixed label bearing the size and fabric or material type.
- No smoking is allowed in any tent regardless of size, location, or available fire protection.

TENT LOCATION

- Tents/booths must be located a minimum of twenty feet (20') from any permanent structure or other membrane structures. Should conditions warrant, this distance may be reduced when approved by the Fire Marshal
 - **Exception 1-**Tents/Membrane structures that are not used for cooking and are less than fifteen-thousand (15,000) square feet need not be separated.
 - **Exception2-** Membrane structures need not be separated from buildings if they do not exceed ten-thousand (10,000) square feet and they meet all of these requirements:
 - 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 International Building Code
 - Required means of egress are provided for both the building and the membrane structure or tent including travel distances
 - Fire apparatus access roads are provided in accordance with Section 503.
- Cooking tents/booths must be separated from non-cooking tents/booths by twenty feet (20')

- Propane cylinders must be at least ten feet (10') away from all tents and membrane structures
- All cooking operations must be located in a separate enclosure where only cooking operations are performed; cooking tents must have a separation from assembly tents
- A twenty (20) foot minimum access road for apparatus shall be maintained at all events
 - A fire break with a minimum width of twelve (12) feet shall be maintained from all guide ropes or other obstructions

EXTINGUISHERS

All cooking operations shall have a minimum of one 2A 20BC size fire extinguisher. If grease, oil, or animal fat is used in cooking operations, a Class K extinguisher will also be required. Tents greater than nine-hundred (900) sq. ft. are required to have extinguishers at least every seventy-five (75) feet and have a minimum size of 2A 20BC.

- Extinguishers must be serviced annually or
- Newly purchased extinguishers do not need to be serviced the year they are bought, keep the receipt attached to the extinguisher for verification



MOBILE FOOD PREPARATION VEHICLES

All mobile food preparation vehicles shall comply with section 319 of the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code. A permit is required from the Fire Prevention Bureau.

A valid state inspection and registration is required to receive the FMO permit.

PORTABLE COOKING EQUIPMENT

All cooking equipment must meet or exceed the following requirements:

Any cooking equipment being used at a special event **SHALL** be of Commercial Grade. The vendor is responsible for producing documentation for the appliance upon request by the fire inspector.

Turkey cookers/Turkey Fryers shall not be used at any time.



BUTANE OR PROPANE EQUIPMENT

- Single butane burners may be used indoors by vendors who are knowledgeable and competent with the safe operation of these devices
 - These devices shall not be located on combustible surfaces and will require a non-combustible barrier to be placed between the device and the combustible surface
 - All hot contents produced or used must be disposed of in a metal container
- The maximum size of LPG tank that can be used inside of a tent/booth is 1.5 gallons or less. LPG tanks with more than 1.5 gallons – 500 gallons must be stored a minimum distance of 10' from outside of the tent/booth. Over 500 gallon tanks must be 25 feet away from tent/booth.

Secured Cylinders



- Tanks must have a shut-off valve
- Stoves must have an on-off valve
- Hoses must be of an approved type for use with the equipment
- Tanks must be protected from damage and secured in the upright position
- Propane tanks must have a pressure regulator located at the tank valve for tent vendors
- Butane or propane tanks cannot be stored in tent/booths
- Tanks must be turned off when not in use
- All gas connections must be tested for leaks prior to use
- A minimum of eighteen inches (18") must be provided between the tent/booth backdrop material and cooking appliance
- A minimum of sixteen inches (16") must be provided between deep fat frying appliances, woks, and open flame stoves. An alternative to the sixteen inches (16") separation requirement includes the provision of a sixteen-inch (16") in height, full width splashguard

Proper regulator placement



CHARCOAL BARBECUE COOKING

- Charcoal barbecue cooking is prohibited inside structures and inside tents/booths
- Charcoal cooking must be performed only in areas away from public access and shall be located a minimum of twenty feet (20') from any booth/tent, structure or combustible.
- Only commercially sold charcoal lighter fluid or electric starters may be used (no gasoline, kerosene, etc.)

- Storage of starter fuel in the tent/booth is not permitted
- Coals must be disposed of only in metal containers that have been designated for such use and are approved by the Fire Marshal. Dumping of coals in trash containers is prohibited

DEEP FAT FRYING

- Deep fat frying that takes place indoors is required to be under a Type I hood system
- All deep fat fryers shall be located on a solid level surface, to prevent tipping or spilling of hot grease and meet all manufacturers installation and operation requirements (per owner's manual)
- Each tent/booth must have a minimum of one 2A-20BC rated portable fire extinguisher. (see extinguisher requirements)
- Any cooking operation releasing grease laden vapors (e.g. grease, oils, and animal fats) will also require one Class K fire extinguisher.
- Each extinguisher must be mounted and secured in a manner that it will not fall over yet be easily accessed in the case of an emergency
- Each extinguisher must be visible and accessible and located away from the cooking area

HOUSEKEEPING

- Only non-combustible materials should be used in cooking areas and around heat sources
- Trash containers should be emptied regularly
- Clean all cooking surfaces regularly to prevent the build-up of grease
- Coals and other waste shall not be disposed in the storm water system

ELECTRICAL AND GENERATORS

Generators

Generators that are part of a trailer or food truck will be subject to approval by the Fire Marshal, all other portable generators shall be:

- Located not less than 20 feet from any tent or membrane structure
- Must be isolated from public contact by fencing, enclosure, or other approved means
- Refueling shall not take place less than 20 feet from any tent or membrane structure
- Fuel storage shall be not less than 50 feet from any tent or membrane structure.

- Portable generators shall not be used indoors

Note: Generators must be operated as manufacturers' have intended and must not be covered or altered in such a way that will create a hazard. Any such condition must be corrected prior to generator use in any event.

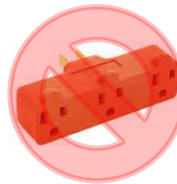
INDOOR USE ONLY

Electrical

- All electrical cords shall be of the proper type
 - Indoor cords shall not be used outdoors
 - All weather cords may be used inside
- Multi-plug adapters without a fusible link are prohibited
 - Cords may have a built in three way multi plug
 - Surge protectors, or multi-plugs with a fusible link are allowed
- Cords must have a ground - Two prong extension cords are prohibited



Examples



CANDLES AND OPEN FLAMES

The use of candles and open flames at any event is subject to review by the Fire Marshal.

OPEN FLAME DECORATIVE DEVICES (this does not include flaming effects, pyro, or cooking devices)

- Class I liquids, Class II liquids, and LP gas shall not be used as fuel
- Liquid or solid fueled devices that have more than 8 ounces of fuel must self-extinguish and not leak more than .25 teaspoon per minute if tipped over
- The device holder shall be constructed to prevent the spillage of liquid fuel or wax at a rate of .25 teaspoon per minute or more when the holder is not in an upright position

- The device holder shall be designed to return to an upright position when tilted to a 45 degree angle
 - Exception: if the device self-extinguishes when tipped or the fuel/wax doesn't spill at a rate of .25 teaspoon per minute
- The flame shall be enclosed except where openings on the side are not more than .375 inch diameter or where openings are on the top and the distance to the top is such that a piece of tissue paper placed on the top will not ignite in 10 seconds.
- Chimneys shall be made of noncombustible materials and securely attached to the open-flame device
 - Exception: A chimney is not required to be attached to any open-flame device that will self-extinguish if the device is tipped over.
- Fuel canisters shall be safely sealed for storage
- Storage and handling of combustible liquids shall be in accordance with the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code
- Shades, where used, shall be made of noncombustible materials and securely attached to the open flame device holder or chimney.
- Candelabras with flame-lighted candles shall be securely fastened in place to prevent overturning, and shall be located away from occupants using the area and away from possible contact with drapes, curtains or other combustibles.

BONFIRE, RECREATIONAL FIRES, AND PORTABLE OUTDOOR FIREPLACES

Permits are required for all fires at special events. Currently only bonfires are charged an inspection fee.

Fires are prohibited on all beaches and on any street within the City of Virginia Beach.

BONFIRES

- The Bonfire shall not be located within 50 ft. of any structure, roadway, woods or brush. Greater distances may be required by the Fire marshal.
- The Bonfire shall be no larger than 5 ft. X 5 ft. X 5 ft. in size.

RECREATION FIRES (a fire similar to a campfire setup)

- Recreational fires shall not be conducted within 25 ft. of a structure or combustible material.
- The fire shall no greater than 3 ft. wide and 2 ft. high.

- Conditions which could cause a fire to spread shall be eliminated prior to ignition.

PORTABLE OUTDOOR FIREPLACES (fabricated unit that houses the fire, includes models fueled by LPG)

- Portable outdoor shall be used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and shall not be operated within 15 ft. of a structure or combustible material.

FUEL RESTRICTIONS

- Fuel for fires shall consist only of clean dry firewood. Wooden pallets are not considered to be firewood and are not allowed to be burned.
- Fires shall not contain rubbish, construction materials, garbage, trash or any material made of rubber, plastic, or petroleum and shall not contain any flammable or combustible liquids.
- The Fire Marshal may prohibit any or all fires which are or could be offensive or objectionable due to smoke or odor emissions.

FIRE ATTENDANTS

- Fires shall be constantly attended by a competent adult, who will oversee the operation until such fire is extinguished. A minimum of one 4-A extinguisher or other approved on-site fire extinguishing equipment shall be available.
- The responsible person assigned the task of "fire attendant" shall not perform any other duties while performing the duties of a "fire watch" (i.e. sweep floors, empty trash, etc).

WEATHER

- No fires shall be burned if wind conditions are 15MPH or above.

CLEAN UP

- After any fire has been conducted, all material burned or unburned shall be removed and disposed of at once (after ensuring all embers have been water soaked).
- Ash shall be disposed of in a non-combustible container.

FIREWORKS, PYRO, AND FLAMING EFFECTS

All special events using fireworks, pyro, and flaming effects need to fill out an application with Fire Prevention. The application must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the event or the application will not be approved. Shooter must have a valid Virginia State License for the appropriate effect; currently

Virginia does not have a flaming effects license. For application information you can visit the Fire Prevention website at www.vbgov.com/fire-prevention.

DECORATIVE MATERIALS

Decorative material used in tents for effect, presentation, or general display must meet flame resistance criteria. Materials being used must have a certificate from the manufacturer authenticating the flame resistance of the item or it must be properly sprayed with a flame resistant chemical treatment. All treatment applications must be approved prior to any spraying. Not all materials are capable of being treated and may need to be evaluated by the Fire Prevention Bureau. All material that is able to be sprayed must have proper documentation in writing attesting that all manufacturer requirements and methods have been followed during the application process.

PLATFORMS

All food vendors utilizing cooking or warming equipment will be required to have a platform when operating on the sand. Vendors or promoters that do not have platforms properly built or that do not have them at all will not be allowed to cook on the sand.

The design requirements for food vendor platforms:

- Platforms shall be constructed on the beach only after the sand has been graded and leveled.
- The platform shall have completely level working surface.
- The surface shall be strong enough to support the weight of the personnel, equipment, and tent without sagging or buckling.
- The platform shall be large enough to create a working surface for all workers and equipment without a gradient change. Platforms shall cover are cooking, food preparation, and serving areas.

Roofing felt paper shall be used to cover the surface of the decking before cooking equipment is put in place.

Platforms that do not meet the minimum requirements will not be approved to operate. Any vendor that has concerns should complete the vendor/sponsor sheet form and submit it to the event organizer.

Fire Prevention will inspect the cooking platforms prior to use. The Fire Marshal or his/her representative shall have the final say as to if the platform is stable enough to use.

Wooden Platform Specifications

- The decking for the platform shall be a minimum of $\frac{3}{4}$ plywood sheets.
- The minimum size lumber to be used as the support structure for the plywood decking shall be 2" x 4" boards spaced on 16" centers.
- Hardware fasteners to be used for construction shall be all weather decking screws. (no nails)
- An alternative material that cooking food vendors may use is composite decking. The decking must be approved by Fire Prevention and the Health Department before use.

Composite Platform Specifications

- A specifications sheet shall be provided for all composite decking.



Wooden Decking



Composite Decking

THE FIRE MARSHAL AND/OR HIS REPRESENTATIVE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO STOP ANY UNSAFE OPERATION, TO INCLUDE THE REVOCATION OF ANY ISSUED PERMIT.

Appendix A

Tent Distance Visual Guide



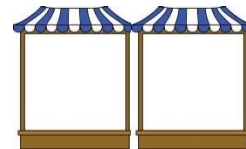
Non-cooking

20 feet



Cooking

Cooking and non-cooking tents need to be separated by at least 20 feet



Multiple tents used for cooking do not need to be separated but must maintain a distance of 20' from non-cooking displays/tents.

Non-cooking



10 feet



500 gallons or less

Propane cylinders 500 gallons or less must be at least 10 feet away from any tent



25 feet



greater than 500 gallons

Propane cylinders more than 500 gallons must be at least 25 feet away from any tent



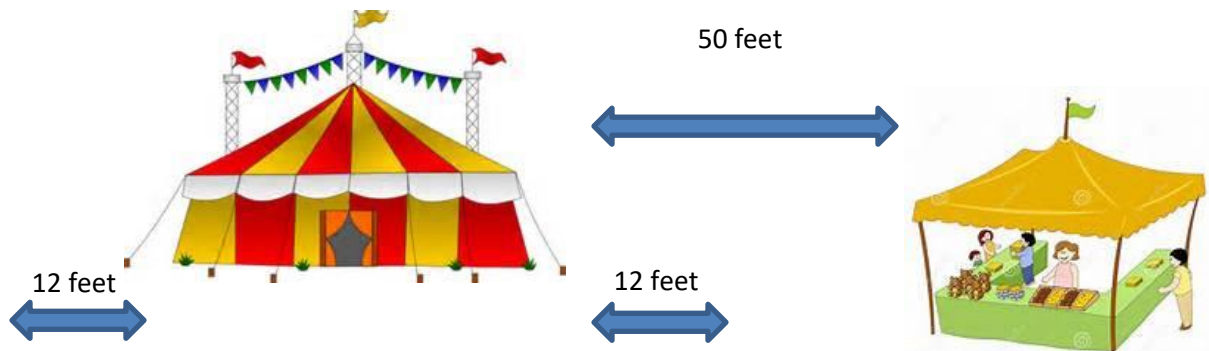
Propane cylinders must have the regulator at the tank when vending at a tent



20 feet



Generators need to be at least 20 feet from any tent. Generators also need to be isolated from public contact.



Tents greater than 15,000 square feet are required to be at least 50 feet from any tent or building. A 12 foot fire break must be maintained from any guy ropes or other obstructions on all sides of the tent.

Exception: A tent 15,000 square foot tent may be closer than 50 feet if it is adjoined to another tent by a corridor.