

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

DATE: January 26, 2018

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Mark A. Gaillard, Fire Chief

CC: Josh Copley, City Manager; Shane Dille, Deputy City Manager,
Andy Bertelsen, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: Tent Permits in the City of Flagstaff

Mayor and Council,

I understand that you've received an inquiry from a concerned citizen regarding changes to the Fire Department's (FD) regulation of tents. I'll provide the background on this issue and will be available for any questions you have by phone (928-853-3824) or email.

Background.

Flagstaff has seen a significant increase in special events permits. The FD has a heightened awareness of these events due to the increase of events and because of some high profile accidental deaths at special events within Arizona. Staff began to research the safe anchoring of tents after discovering several incidents of injury and deaths around the United States due to insufficient anchoring of the tent. Particularly of concern for the FD is the high winds we experience during the special event season here in Flagstaff.

Code Environment.

Tent Definition- A structure, enclosure or shelter, with or without sidewalls or drops, constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by any manner except by air or the contents that it protects. *(Note: Tents regulated by these provisions are a minimum size of 400 square feet in area which is representative of a typical 20 foot x 20 foot tent)*

Anchorage Requirements-Tents or membrane structures and their appurtenances shall be adequately roped, braced and anchored to withstand the elements of weather and prevent against collapsing. **Documentation of structural stability shall be furnished to the fire code official on request.**

What's changed in the FD's approach to this portion of the fire code?

Past practice in the application of this section of the code did not include a request for the documentation of structural stability from the permit holder (see **highlighted** provision above). Our change is simply to place into practice the requirement of *EVERY* permit applicant to provide documentation of structural stability of tents, e.g. instead of a discretionary action the FD will consistently apply this standard to all applications for tent permits.

As the fire department has introduced this change in the Special Event Permitting process, a great deal of discussion has begun to occur regarding preferred methods such as staking vs. water barrels etc. In application of the code, tent rental vendors are very familiar with standards for anchoring as tent manufacturers provide specifications for the safe installation and use of tents. Special event promoters will rely on their vendors to provide the requested documentation.

What's next?

During this off season we have worked internally on the needed procedural requirements for tent installation, however, outreach has not yet occurred with stakeholder groups. We have communicated with the concerned citizen regarding this issue and have indicated our intent to conduct our planned stakeholder outreach in February.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information and for your continued commitment to keep Flagstaff's citizens and visitors safe.