FMO STANDARD 316-01, rev.4
SPECIAL EVENTS, FESTIVALS, PYROTECHNICS, and THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES

General Permit requirements

Who must obtain a special event permit?

Any special event where temporary structures, fireworks 1.3G, or INDOOR fireworks, pyrotechnics, or flame effects are used—stage, trade show vendor booths or exhibits, carnival rides, tents, temporary food service, haunted houses, music festivals, theatrical performances, and the like must have the proper permit(s) before the date of the special event.

- For all EXCEPT Fireworks 1.3G, pyrotechnics, or flame effects: Complete a Temporary Event Fire Code permit application, available from the Harris County Permits Office. You may download the form from: http://hcpid.org/permits/docs/FC_temporary_event_app.pdf. If you have any questions about this process, please call 713-956-3000 between 7:30AM and 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

- For all fireworks, pyrotechnics, or flame effects: Complete a Request for Fireworks Inspection Application, available from the Harris County Fire Marshal’s Office. You may download the form from: http://www.hcfmo.net/fireworks.aspx. If you have any questions about this process, please call 281-426-8030 between 7:30AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

- For all temporary food vendors: After completing the Temporary Event Fire Code permit application process, apply for a temporary food vendor permit from the Harris County Public Health Department. Information about that process is available at: http://www.hcphes.org/eph/TemporaryFoodPermitHandout2013.pdf. If you have any questions, please call 713-274-6300 between 8:00AM and 3:30PM, Monday through Friday.

Are there any noise limits for special events?

Yes. A noise is presumed to be unreasonable if the noise exceeds a decibel level of 85 after the person making the noise receives notice from a magistrate or peace officer that the noise is a public nuisance. Generally, an offense is a Class C misdemeanor, but may be escalated to a Class B misdemeanor. (Tex. Penal Code §42.02)

Fire safety plans

Fire safety plans shall include the following:

1. The procedure for reporting a fire or other emergency.
2. The life safety strategy and procedures for notifying, relocating, or evacuating occupants.
3. Site plans indicating the following:
   3.1 The occupancy assembly point.
   3.2 The locations of fire hydrants.
   3.3 The normal routes of fire department vehicle access.
4. Floor plans identifying the locations of:
   4.1 Emergency exits, primary evacuation routes and secondary evacuation routes.
   4.2 Accessible egress routes and areas of refuge.
   4.3 Manual fire alarm boxes, portable fire extinguishers and occupant-use hose stations.
   4.4 Fire alarm annunciators and controls.
5. Fire prevention plan, to include:
5.1 A list of major fire hazards associated with the normal use and occupancy of the premises, including maintenance and housekeeping procedures.

5.2 Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance of systems and equipment installed to prevent or control fires.

5.3 Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance, housekeeping and controlling fuel hazard sources.

6. Fire evacuation plan, to include the following:

6.1 Emergency egress or escape routes and whether evacuation of the building is to be complete or where approved, by selected floor or areas only.

6.2 Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for rescue or emergency medical aid.

6.3 The preferred and any alternative means of notifying occupants of a fire or emergency.

6.4 A description of the emergency voice/alarm communication system alert tone and preprogrammed voice messages, where provided.

6.5 The preferred and any alternative means of reporting fires and other emergencies to the fire department or designated emergency response organization.

6.6 Procedures for employees who must remain to operate critical equipment before evacuating.

6.7 Procedures for accounting for employees and occupants after evacuation have been completed.

6.8 Identification and assignment of personnel who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.

General fire safety requirements

Do I need to submit plans for a special event permit?

Yes, plans are required for all special events. The plan submittal form requires a complete layout of your event including parking, emergency access, and all structures, tents, carnival rides or equivalent items. For details about special event plan requirements, go to [http://hcpid.org/permits/fc_temp_food_vendors_etc.html](http://hcpid.org/permits/fc_temp_food_vendors_etc.html).

Who is subject to a fire inspection?

Anyone event where temporary structures; open flame, LP-gas, charcoal, or wood cookers; or other operations that may increase fire risk at festival events, fairs, carnivals, trade shows, and exhibition events in the unincorporated areas of Harris County may be inspected for fire and life safety hazards at any time before, during, or after the event. Under State Law, you must make any corrections required by the Fire Marshal.

Who will conduct the fire inspection?

Certified fire inspectors from the Harris County Fire Marshal’s Office will conduct all fire inspections in the unincorporated county. You may also be inspected by a local fire department that performs pre-plan surveys, but these do not replace an HCFMO fire inspection.

Will I receive some documentation that a fire inspection has been conducted?

Yes, you will receive a written report from the fire inspector. If any corrections are required, they will be noted on the inspection report. Note: Generally, failure to comply with a Fire Marshal’s Order is a Class B misdemeanor, but may be escalated to a State Jail Felony. (Tex Local Gov’t Code § 352.022)

May I use a tent, canopy, or open air structure?

Yes, if the tent, canopy, or open air structure, including air-supported structures, meets IFC-2006 requirements. All booths, tents, table covering, and other combustible materials composed of cloth, paper, plastic, and similar materials must be flame retardant, including any added material. This includes signage and/or awning over cooking areas, or attached to the booth in any manner.
Are there specific electrical requirements?

Yes, all electrical components must meet IFC-2006 requirements for temporary electrical service. All appliances must be grounded and have grounding prongs intact. All electrical wiring and other components must be in good condition. No exposed wiring or splices are allowed. All junction boxes and appliances must be UL listed for the intended use, and have all safety guard in place. One GFI circuit breaker is required for any circuit locates within 6 feet of a sink, wet well or other water source. All generators that are equipped with a grounding lug must be grounded to a ground rod. All lamps for general illumination shall be protected from contact by a suitable guard.

How many exits are required and how wide do they have to be?

The number, location, and width of all exits must meet the requirements of IFC-2006. All booths must have an unobstructed path of egress to the exit. Booths exceeding 20 feet in any direction must have two or more exits. The minimum exit width is 36 inches.

Can I use extension cords?

Yes, extension cords may be used if they are placed where they will not be walked on by employees or the public; have grounding prongs intact; and have sufficient capacity for the intended use. Minimum wire gauge is 14-guage.

Do I need a fire watch?

When required by the Fire Marshal in the interest of public safety, a fire watch may be required. Fire Watch Personnel shall be required at all events where open flames or pyrotechnics are used by performers inside a building. The number of Fire Watch Personnel required for these events shall be determined the Fire Marshal. A fire watch fee, as established by Commissioners Court, may be charged to cover the cost of fire watch personnel and equipment.

Cooking

Are fire extinguishers required in cooking booths?

Yes, all cooking booths at festivals, fairs, carnivals and trade shows or exhibition events require at least one approved 2-A, 10-B:C portable fire extinguisher with current inspection date tag. All cooking booths exceeding 20 feet in any dimension will require a minimum of two 2-A, 10-B:C fire extinguishers with current date tags attached, mounted in a location that is fully visible and readily accessible. Larger booths may require additional fire extinguishers.

Are there any special extinguisher requirements for deep fry cooking?

Yes, where deep fry cooking is performed using vegetable or animal oils or fats, at least on approved Type “K” fire extinguisher with current inspection date tag is required. (Type “K” fire extinguishers are for use only for cooking grease or oil fires (class B” fires” and are not to be used, or substituted for the required 2A, 10B:C fire extinguishers unless approved by the Fire Marshal.)

Are there any barriers required around cooking equipment?

Yes, all booths using portable cooking equipment shall provide protective barriers (such as: chains, ropes, wooden barricades, or similar obstacles) to prevent public access or exposure to any cooking area that is fueled by LP-gas, wood, or charcoal. A minimum of 3 feet of clearance distance from the public, buildings, or combustible storage is required at all times. Temporary concrete barriers or similar type temporary barriers may be required to prevent damage from motorized vehicles.

Can I store combustibles in the booth?

Yes, all combustibles must be stored at least 18 inches away from hot surfaces or cooking appliances; 3 feet distance from LP-gas, wood, or charcoal fueled cooking areas. Highly combustible materials such as bales of hay or similar materials are prohibited inside building or any exit pathways. Remove trash, rubbish and debris from booth areas.
LP-Gas

Who can connect LP-gas cylinders and equipment?

Vendor employees may perform connections for cylinders and equipment.

How should I store LP-gas cylinders?

The maximum number of cylinders shall be in accordance with IFC-2006. Storage should not exceed one-day’s requirements unless approved in writing by the Fire Marshal. Store spare LP-gas containers in locations not accessible to the public, and to reduce the risk of excessive temperature rise, physical damage, or tampering. Store the cylinder so the pressure relief valve is in the vapor space of the cylinder. Post clearly visible, approved “Danger- No smoking” signs in the vicinity of stored cylinders.

Is there a proper way to secure LP-gas cylinders?

Yes, secure all LP-gas cylinders (empty or full) in an upright position, and so they can’t fall over. All pressure relief valves shall be directed away from the public. When required by the Fire Marshal, cylinders must be secured in a non-combustible cabinet that is well ventilated, and surrounded by a temporary chain link fence not less than 6 feet in height.

Are separate inspection stickers required for LP-fueled equipment?

Yes, commercial grade LP-gas equipment must be inspected annually, and must display an inspection sticker indicating the equipment has been inspected within the past 12-month period by licensed personnel.

Can I operate motorized industrial vehicles inside a building?

Yes, the vehicle must meet IFC-2006 requirements for LP-gas fueled equipment, including fire extinguishers. LP-gas cylinders on motorized industrial vehicles can be changed out only at approved locations outside of the building. Cylinders CANNOT be replaced when the vehicle is inside a building.

Charcoal/ Wood Use

Can liquid starters be used?

No, only an electrical starter, chimney starter, or other device designed for this purpose may be used. Quick starting charcoal is also acceptable.

Is there a minimum clearance away from charcoal or wood cooking equipment?

Yes, all cooking equipment shall be at least 3 feet away from the public, buildings, or combustible materials.

Is firebox protection required?

Yes, a metal pan constructed of a minimum of No.18 U.S. gauge sheet metal shall be placed under the firebox of barbeque pits or fireboxes to catch live coals. The pan shall be large enough to provide complete coverage beneath any openings under the pit or firebox.

What should I do with hot ashes or coals?

Before moving a portable charcoal or wood cooker, all fires must be extinguished, and hot surfaces must be cold to the touch. Remove all ashes, cinders, and coals from the cooker, or be sure they are cold to the touch, before moving the cooker. Do not deposit hot ashes, cinders, smoldering coals or other hot materials in a combustible receptacle within 10 feet of other combustibles (including buildings, awnings, or partitions); or within 10 feet of openings to buildings (such as windows, fresh air vents or intakes, doors, or other wall penetrations).
Theatrical Performers and Artisans, including Pyrotechnics and Flame Effects

Are there specific code requirements for the use of flame effects or pyrotechnics?

Yes, any performer or artisans who, in their performance, use any flame effects or pyrotechnics before an audience of 50 or more people must comply with the requirements of IFC-2006, Texas Occupations Code Chapter 2154, NFPA 160, and NFPA 1126.

Is a separate permit required for the use of flame effects or pyrotechnics?

Yes, a permit for flame effects or pyrotechnic use is required for this type of event. You can apply for a permit at the Harris County Fire Marshal’s Office, 2318 Atascosita, Humble, TX. 77396 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 3:30 PM, Monday—Friday. The telephone number is 281-436-8030.

Are there additional requirements for indoor use?

Yes, before flame effects or pyrotechnics can be used inside a building you must have:

- A plan that details the display of pyrotechnics and flame effects, including a list of times and locations of all performances, and is approved by the Harris County Fire Marshal;
- Written permission of the property owner and tenant;
- Proof of at least $1 million general liability insurance in the form of a certificate of insurance;
- An approved permit from the Harris County Fire Marshal, issued to a Texas-licensed flame effects operator (for flame effects) or pyrotechnic effects operator (for pyrotechnic effects);
- The building must have a complete and approved fire-sprinkler system, or sufficient Fire Watch personnel approved by the Fire Marshal;
- Verbal instructions about the location and use of available exits, plus information about the building’s fire protection and alarms systems, must be made to the assembly or audience.
- No exit door can be locked or otherwise obstructed;
- One or more Texas license holders must be onsite at all times where pyrotechnics are used, discharged, or ignited (special effects operator’s license); OR where flame effects are used, discharged, or ignited (flame effects operator’s license).

What distances are required between performers and the audience?

Distances must meet the requirements of NFPA 160 and NFPA 1123. For proximate use, you must meet the requirements of NFPA 1126. There must be at least 15 feet in all directions between the performer and the public. You need to have a distinct boundary, clearly marked and visible to the public. The boundary must be a physical barrier in a method approved by the Fire Marshal.

Can I use alcohol for the flame effect?

No, Class I flammable liquids, such as alcohol or cigarette lighter fluid, cannot be used. You cannot ignite aerosol propellants, spray paints or lacquers. Class II combustible liquids may be used if they are stored in a listed metal safety can, that is equipped with a spring-loaded lid and flame-arrester. If you are “quick-drying” paintings, art work or similar objects, you must use UL-listed, handheld heating or drying devices only. These must be approved in advance by the Harris County Fire Marshal.

Do I need a fire extinguisher?

Yes, fire extinguishers must meet IFC-2006 requirements. The minimum requirement is one portable fire extinguisher with a minimum rating 2-A, 10-B:C. This extinguisher need to be readily accessible during the performance, with a full charge, and a current (meaning inspected within the past 12 months) inspection tag.