



Temporary Structure Permit Guide

Version	Date	Comments
1	October, 2023	New temporary structure permitting processes

A. INTRODUCTION

Commonwealth of Virginia regulations and this University guidance document require inspection and/or permitting of all temporary structures to include tents, stages, and amusement devices erected on University property. Depending on the type and size of the temporary structure, a written permit may be required by the University. The type and size of the temporary structure will also determine how many days prior to the erection of the device a *Temporary Structure Permit Application* is required to be submitted to Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) or the Office of University Building Official (OUBO).

B. SCOPE

This Guide applies to all George Mason University employees, departments, and external organizations (collectively referred to as Event Clients) that use, erect, contract to erect, or oversee the installation of temporary structures on University property. All temporary structures erected on George Mason University property shall be maintained so that they do not pose a safety hazard. Events utilizing temporary structures shall reserve the space they request using Events Management 25 Live registration system;

<https://events.gmu.edu/scheduling/>

C. TENTS

The square footage and occupant load of the tent will determine the process that the Event Client shall observe. For calculating size with multiple tents, support ropes, guy wires, water barrels, or any device attached to the tent shall be considered part of the tent. Tents erected adjacent to, side by side, or within 12 feet must have their individual areas added together for these guidelines. Tents shall be separated by at least 12 feet (IFC 3103.2) to be considered separate tents. The time requirements for the *Temporary Structure Permit Application* submission shall be followed to facilitate issuing permits. The earlier the *Temporary Structure Permit Application* is submitted the easier it will be to address issues that might arise.

Tents Size:

- **100 to 399 square feet (NO Permit Required):** The Event Client shall follow the applicable minimum requirements (see below) when using and assembling the tent.
- **400 to 900 square feet (Permit Required):** The Event Client shall submit a [*Temporary Structure Permit Application*](#) no later than 10 business days prior to the event. The Event



Client shall have a valid permit and be prepared for a tent inspection no later than 2 hours before the event.

- **Greater than 900 square feet OR having more than 50 occupants (Permit Required):** The Event Client shall submit a [Temporary Structure Permit Application](#) no later than 15 days prior to the event. The Event Client shall have a valid permit and be prepared for a tent inspection no later than 2 hours before the event

Minimum Requirements: All tents, regardless of size shall comply with the following:

- Be placed at least 30 feet from the exterior of surrounding buildings.
- Temporary structures shall not block:
 - Any means of ingress or egress of other structures,
 - Emergency fire lanes, and
 - Any equipment that pertains to or aids in the suppression of a fire (e.g., fire hydrant, fire department connection, or post indicator valve).
- Open flames or cooking devices may not be used under tents. All cooking appliances or open flames to include grills may not be used within 20 feet of a tent.
 - Exception: when cooking operations are regulated by the Virginia Department of Health.
- May not be occupied when local winds are forecasted or known to be greater than 38 miles per hour.
- All tents are subject to removal by the Event Coordinator, EHS, Facilities Management, OUBO, or vendor due to severe weather.
- Provide adequate clear paths for egress/exiting.
- Maintain a copy of the Tent Permit (if required) on-site.
- Have original manufacture's tags attached indicating that the material of the tent is flame retardant (if tent is 400 square feet or greater).
- Tents may only be occupied during daylight unless code compliant electrical lighting is provided.
- Sufficient number and properly marked lighted emergency exits (for tents greater than 900 square feet with sidewalls; see Means of Egress section below).
- Fire extinguisher on site (see Fire Extinguisher section below)
- Additional requirements may be stipulated in the permit issued by GMU OUBO.

Tent Permit Application Process: Tents that are erected without a [Temporary Structure Application](#), associated documentation, and/or permit are prohibited from being occupied and subject to removal. All tents 400 sq/ft or greater are required to be permitted. The Application process includes a digital form and submission of the following attachments:

- George Mason University campus map with indication of the location of the event.
- Detailed site plan including method of tie-down and /or anchorage and distances to surrounding buildings or structures.
- Detailed floor plan with egress and exits shown (for tents with sidewalls), and furniture/equipment arrangement.



Before the Tent is Installed: Miss Utility (811 or 1-800-552-7001) and Facilities Management Customer Service Center must be contacted and all utilities marked (only for tents that require stakes for anchoring).

Fire Extinguishers: A certified fire extinguisher of appropriate size and type must be available within 75 feet of any point in a tent. The number of fire extinguishers depends on the tent's size. See *Table 1, Quantity of Fire Extinguishers Required* for further details.

Table 1: Quantity of Fire Extinguishers Required

Tent Size (sq ft.)	Minimum Number of 5-pound ABC Extinguishers
< 200	One is recommended but not required
201-400	1
401-600	2
601-800	3
>800	The maximum travel distance to an extinguisher from any point shall be less than 75 feet

Means of Egress: Tents with side walls are required to have exits. Exits shall be distributed evenly around the exterior of the tent, and shall meet the requirements of *Table 2, Egress Size and Number* below:

Table 2: Egress Size and Number

Occupant Load	Minimum Number of Means of Egress	Minimum Width of Means of Egress in Inches
10 to 199	2	72
200 to 499	3	72
500 to 999	4	96
1,000 to 1,999	5	120
2,000 to 2,999	6	120
Over 3,000	Consult with OUBO	

Portable Tent Heaters: Portable tent heaters may be used. Heaters shall be forced air heaters with an enclosed flame. The heater unit shall be at least 10 feet from the edge of the tent and shall not impede egress routes. Propane gas is an acceptable fuel; however, propane cylinders shall be properly secured and be at least 10 feet from flammable and combustible substances, including but not limited to, landscaping, décor, furniture, and the tent itself. The cylinder shall be properly labeled and have a “No Smoking” sign prominently displayed.

D. AMUSEMENT DEVICES

All amusement devices shall be inspected and permitted prior to use. All amusement devices shall comply with the [Virginia Amusement Device Regulations](#). A Seal shall be affixed before the event starts and use of the device

Inspections of amusement devices shall be performed by a contracted third-party inspector. It is the responsibility of the Event Client to ensure that an inspection takes place a minimum of two



hours prior to the event. [Temporary Structure Permit Applications](#) for amusement devices shall be submitted to the OUBO 15 business days prior to the event.

Exception: A small mechanical ride or an inflatable amusement device that has a certificate of inspection issued by any local building department or Commonwealth of Virginia Certified Amusement Device Inspector for either a six-month period for small mechanical rides or within a one-year period for inflatable amusement devices prior to the dates the small mechanical ride or inflatable amusement device is to be used, regardless of whether the device has been disassembled and moved to a new site.

The following equipment or devices **are not** considered amusement devices subject to this guidance:

1. Nonmechanized playground or recreational equipment such as swing sets, sliding boards, climbing bars, jungle gyms, skateboard ramps and similar equipment where no admission fee is charged for its use or for admittance to areas where the equipment is located;
2. Coin-operated rides designed to accommodate three or less passengers;
3. Water slides or similar equipment used in community association, community club or community organization swimming pools;
4. Mechanical bulls or similar devices;
5. Devices known as mall trains, shopping mall trains, or electric trackless trains for malls; and
6. Devices known as water walking balls, euro bubbles, or similar devices.

Permit Process: A [Temporary Structure Permit Application](#) shall be submitted for each amusement device that requires a permit for each time it is erected/installed. One permit application may be submitted for multiple amusement devices at one event, if applicable. A complete permit application shall include:

- A George Mason University campus map indicating the location of the event, detailed site plan indicating the layout of amusement devices including distance to the surrounding buildings, tents, stages, and other event equipment.
- If multiple devices require a permit only one site plan is required however a copy shall be submitted with each application.
- A certificate of insurance that satisfies University and commonwealth minimum insurance requirements from the owner or vendor providing the amusement device. The certificate of insurance must identify the Commonwealth of Virginia, George Mason University and its officers, employees, agents, and volunteers as additionally insured.
- Specifications or cut sheet on the amusement device from the manufacturer.
- Serial number of the device being used.

Accidents involving serious injury or death:

If an accident involving the serious injury or death of a patron occurs, Call 911. The operation of an amusement device shall cease and the OUBO, University Police and DHCD shall be notified as soon as practicable, but in no case later than during the next working day. The operation of the



device shall not resume until inspected by a private inspector or an inspector from the OUBO department, except where the owner or operator determines the cause was not related to malfunction or improper operation of the amusement device.

E. TEMPORARY STAGES AND PLATFORMS

An OUBO *Temporary Structure Permit* and inspections are required if any of the following conditions apply:

- Privately rented or owned and installed if larger than 120 ft² including connecting areas.
- Mason owned and installed stages/platforms larger than 300 ft² including connecting areas.
- All temporary stages/platforms intended to be occupied by 10 or more people.
- All temporary stages/platforms elevated greater than 14 inches above adjacent surface

Before issuing a permit, all temporary stages and platforms require an architectural and structural plan review to ensure that the stages and platforms meet the minimum requirements of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

The use of portable trailers and mobile units for temporary stages or platforms do not require a building permit. The stage or platform shall be permanently fixed to the wheels of the portable trailer or mobile unit with a valid state issued license plate. Guardrails and/or stairs with handrails meeting the minimum requirements of the USBC are required as applicable.

A [*Temporary Structure Permit Application*](#) is required to be submitted for each stage or platform 10 business days prior to the event. All publicly accessible stages shall have a lift or ramp available for disability access. An inspector will conduct a site safety inspection at least two hours before using the stage or platform. A *Temporary Structure Permit Application* for a stage or platform shall include:

- George Mason University campus map with the location of the event.
- A detailed site plan, identify accessible parking and route to the stage and or seating including location of surrounding buildings or structures
- Detailed floor plan with egress and exits shown and furniture/equipment arrangement
- A Detailed diagram of ramps provided for disability access including length, width and slope of the ramp run; length and width of the landings; handrails and edge protection. All ramps shall comply with the ADA 2010 Standards for Accessible Design, §405.

F. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

All [*Temporary Structure Permit Applications*](#) are submitted online. If you are unable to use the URL embedded in this document visit: <https://go.gmu.edu/TempStruPermit> (please note the URL is cases sensitive).



Appendix A: Definitions

Amusement Device: means (i) a device or structure open to the public by which persons are conveyed or moved in an unusual manner for diversion, but excluding snow tubing parks and rides, ski terrain parks, ski slopes, ski trails, and (ii) passenger tramways. For this definition, the phrase “open to the public” means that the public has full access to a device or structure at an event, irrespective of whether a fee is charged.

Event Client: The person who is responsible for the venue or event (see University Policy 1103). This person must provide their contact information on [Temporary Structure Permit Applications](#) and serve as the emergency contact for the event. The Event Client is also responsible for appointing Crowd Managers when the anticipated audience is greater than 1000 people outdoors or 250 people indoors (see *Crowd Manager Guide*) and responsible for rescheduling the event or disseminating information if an emergency occurs.

Temporary Structure: Any structure that can be readily and completely dismantled and removed from the site between periods of actual use and includes amusement devices, tents, stages, and platforms (Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, 2018).

Platform: A raised area used for worship, the presentation of music, plays or other entertainment; the head table for special guests; the raised area for lecturers and speakers; boxing and wrestling rings; theater-in-the-round stages; and similar purposes wherein, other than horizontal sliding curtains, there are no overhead hanging curtains, drops, scenery or stage effects other than lighting and sound. A temporary platform is one installed for not more than 30 days.

Small Mechanical Ride: means an amusement device, other than an inflatable amusement device, where (i) the assembly time for the device is two hours or less, (ii) the revolutions per minute of any rotation of the components of the device is not greater than seven, (iii) the device has a footprint of less than 500 square feet, and (iv) the device does not invert a patron or lift a patron more than three feet in the air, measured from the ground to the bottom of the patron’s feet when the device is operating

Stage: A space utilized for entertainment or presentations, which includes overhead hanging curtains, drops, scenery or stage effects other than lighting and sound

Structure: An assembly of materials forming a construction for occupancy or use including stadiums, gospel, and circus tents, reviewing stands, platforms, staging, observation towers, radio towers, water tanks, storage tanks (underground and aboveground), trestles, piers, wharves, swimming pools, amusement devices, storage bins, and other structures of this general nature but excluding water wells. The word “structure” shall be construed as though followed by the words “or part or parts thereof” unless the context clearly requires a different meaning. “Structure” shall not include roadway tunnels and bridges owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation, which shall be governed by construction and design standards approved by the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board.



Tent: A structure, enclosure, umbrella structure or shelter, with or without sidewalls or drops, constructed of fabric or pliable material supported in any manner except by air or the contents it protects (see “Umbrella structure”).

Umbrella Structure: A structure, enclosure, or shelter with or without sidewalls or drops, constructed of fabric or pliable material supported by a central pole or poles (see “Tent”).