

Bigtopmania: updated March 2017

Guidelines for Developing an Emergency Evacuation Plan for a Tented Event;

(Advice based on American Rental Association guide 2016, UK Insurance, HSE and Industry guidance)

Please then see accompanying checklist for your use.

The rented tent will be erected to exacting standards to provide temporary accommodations for your event.

Tents can provide protection from moderate weather, but are not designed for use as a shelter in severe weather because such conditions could exceed their ability to protect occupants. In addition, tents may need to be evacuated for other types of emergency situations.

It is your responsibility to ensure your guests' safety. The rental company recommends that you develop an emergency evacuation plan so you are prepared to act decisively in the event of an emergency during your event.

Following are suggested guidelines for developing an emergency evacuation plan.

★ Prior to the Event

Appointed Designated Person(s)

Designate someone who will be in charge of the emergency evacuation plan and on site for the entire event.

The designated person(s) will assist in developing the plan and be responsible during the event for monitoring the weather, determining whether a situation calls for evacuation, and if so, acting decisively and authoritatively to instruct guests to evacuate. The designated person(s) can be an individual or a small group.

For example:

- For a wedding: A family member, member of the wedding party, etc.
- For a corporate event: An event planner, company representative, etc.
- For a public event: A show manager, representative of the venue, the fire chief, etc.

These Guidelines for Developing an Emergency Evacuation Plan for a Tented Event are intended to provide general guidance to assist you with emergency evacuation planning when using tents and related rental equipment.

Bigtopmania does not purport to include in these Guidelines all possible scenarios which may require evacuation or all possible safety measures and procedures that could be used in each evacuation scenario. You should use your own independent judgment and discretion in successfully implementing these Guidelines to best fit the unique needs of your event and your particular use of the tent and other rental equipment.

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Emergency Conditions

Work with the appointed person(s) to determine the emergency conditions that will trigger an evacuation of the tent structure. Following are some examples of situations in which it is unsafe to remain in a tent:

Damaging winds	The tent could collapse and injure occupants; the tent cannot protect occupants from flying debris.
Fire or explosion	The tent cannot protect occupants from excessive heat, flames or flying debris.
Lightning	Lightning poses a risk of electrocution, electric shock or fire.
Hail or sleet	Excessive weight could cause the tent to collapse and injure occupants.
Excessive rainfall	Saturation of ground with water may compromise securement. The tent could collapse and injure occupants.
Flash flooding	Saturation of ground with water may compromise securement. The tent could collapse and injure occupants. Rivers and canals can burst banks at short notice.
Snow accumulation	Excessive weight could cause the tent to collapse and injure occupants.
Gas leak	Atmospheric conditions may not be suitable for occupants.
Earth movement (e.g., tremor, landslide)	Ground conditions may not be suitable for occupants and may compromise the tent's securement.
Terrorism / crowd / vehicles	it may not be safe to remain in the vicinity or guests may get out of hand.

Evacuation Location

Work with your appointed person(s) to predetermine where guests will go and how they will get there if the tent must be evacuated:

- Identify a nearby permanent building large enough to accommodate your guests, make sure it will be open and accessible during your event, and make a note of its address in case you have to call for emergency assistance. If there is no building nearby, consider using vehicles, an open area away from the tent or locations recommended by the National Weather Service or Emergency Alert System. Of utmost importance is that the tent should never be used as a shelter in an emergency situation.
- Determine how guests will get to the evacuation location (e.g., the route to take, travel by foot or car, etc.). Consider preparing a sketch of the event site.

Communication

Plan how you will communicate with your guests in an emergency.

Depending upon the size of the event, consider backup methods of communication for situations in which there is no electrical power, cellphone signals are interrupted, etc.

★ Prior to and During the Event

Weather Monitoring

If not way before the event through advance weather forecasting, beginning at least two hours before the start of the event, the appointed person(s) should begin monitoring a source of weather information such as the National Weather Service.

If any of the weather emergency conditions listed previously are predicted, you may need to postpone or cancel the event.

Tent Structure

After the tent has been installed, monitor the tent structure for various changes. These would include stakes or augers pulling out of the ground; tent weights moving; loose poles, ropes or straps, etc.

If you notice any of these occurring, contact the rental company immediately.

★ During the Event

Announcement

Based on weather forecasts and other circumstances, you may wish to make an announcement to participants regarding the identification of the point person(s), location of exits and the emergency evacuation location.

Evacuation

Continue to monitor the weather and be alert for other emergency situations during the event. Implement your evacuation plan for any of the following conditions:

- A severe weather alert is posted by the National Weather Service.
- Dark clouds are approaching.
- Lightning strikes within one mile (less than a five-second count between lightning and thunder).
- Hail or sleet falls.
- Twigs break from trees or large trees sway.
- Any of the tent anchoring devices fail or the tent begins to move (e.g., tent poles wobble, ropes snap, tent top rips or tears, etc.).
- Rain falls so hard it runs off tent walls in sheets.
- Water is running through the tent or surrounding area.
- Snow or ice is accumulating.
- An explosion, excessive heat, smoke or fire is in the vicinity of the event.
- There is ground movement of any kind.
- Other conditions exist as previously determined in developing your emergency plan.

Call for Help

After instructing guests to evacuate, you may need to call for police, fire or medical help as the situation warrants.

★ After an Evacuation

Even if the tent appears intact, it may not be safe to return. If stakes or augers have pulled out of the ground, tent weights have moved, or there are loose poles, ropes or straps, contact the rental company so that the tent may be re-secured before resuming the event.

★ Create your checklist!