



City of La Quinta

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BUILDING & SAFETY DEPARTMENT

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Structural Requirements for Temporary and Permanent Tents (Including tents, canopies, and membrane structures)

Enforcing authority for these Code provisions is:

- State Fire Marshal (as represented by Riverside County Fire Department).

These regulations apply to:

- 2007 California Building Code (CBC), Chapter 31E:
 - Tents, awnings or other fabric enclosures, including membrane (air-supported and air-inflated) structures and places of assemblage, in or under which 10 or more persons may gather for any lawful purpose.
- 2007 California Fire Code (CFC), Chapter 24, Section 2403:
 - Temporary tents, canopies and membrane structures erected for a period of not more than 180 days within a 12-month period on a single premises.
 - Tents and membrane structures having an area in excess of 200 square feet.
 - Canopies having an area in excess of 400 square feet.
- 2007 California Fire Code (CFC), Chapter 24, Section 2404:
 - All tents, canopies and membrane structures, both temporary and permanent.

Anchorage and Structural design:

- Fire Code requires that tents, canopies 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 chief on request. (CFC §2403.9)
- Building Code requires that tents be adequately guyed, supported and braced to withstand specific wind forces. The enforcing authority may require certification of the provisions of this section from a structural, civil or other qualified registered engineer. (CBC §3105E)

Building Department involvement:

- The Riverside County Fire Department does not have staff qualified to perform a review of structural engineering calculations.
- The Building Department has qualified consultants in place to do this work.
- The Building Department has historically performed this cooperative service for the Fire Department.

(continued)

Wet-signature requirements:

- “All final civil engineering calculations and reports shall bear the signature and seal or stamp of the registrant, the date of signing and sealing or stamping, and the expiration date of the certificate or authority.” (CA Business & Professions Code §6735(a))
- This requirement is also restated in California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 5 (Rules of the Board for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors), §411(g) and §411(h), where rubber stamp signatures are exclusively prohibited.

Building Department conclusions:

- To protect the public from structural failures, the building official is charged with enforcing all provisions of the building code, including verifying that engineers have exercised responsible control in the design of structures. That responsible control is verified by enforcing the wet-signature requirements.
- California Business & Professions Code §6735(b) indicates that “a registered civil engineer who signs civil engineering documents shall not be responsible for damage caused by subsequent... uses of those documents, if... not authorized or approved by the registered engineer who originally signed the documents.” The Building Department believes that failure to enforce this provision of the law leaves the public unprotected by allowing an unauthorized use of an engineers design.
- Because his signature acknowledges his acceptance of the liability of the use of his design on a particular structure, the Building Department’s enforcement of wet-signature requirements protects the engineer from potential legal action stemming from unauthorized use of his design.

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by Greg Butler, Building & Safety Manager

