

GUIDELINE 16. SPECIAL EVENT PLANNING

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1** To establish a guideline for the safe planning and implementation of Special Events taking place within the University of Pennsylvania's campus that will be facilitated and conducted by University staff and outside vendors.
- 1.2** This guideline establishes the basis in which all individuals and departments actively participate by following the approved safe methods for warming food, decorating, set up and crowd maintenance during catered or departmental events.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Special Event** - a gathering of individuals, outside of standard University operations, generally lasting from a few hours to a few days, designed to celebrate, honor, discuss, sell, teach about, encourage, observe, or influence.
- 2.2 Methanol Gel** - fuel used for heating food, typically placed under a chafing dish. It is usually sold in a small canister and burned directly within that canister, with or without a wick.
- 2.3 Exit Pathway** - a continuous and unobstructed path of exit travel from any point within a building to a place of safety.
- 2.4 Occupant Load** - the total number of people that might occupy a building or space at any one time.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITY

- 3.1** It is the responsibility of all parties conducting a special event to carry out the daily observation, enforcement and adherence to this guideline. In addition, all University staff shall share equally in compliance with this guideline.
 - 3.1.1** Building Administrator (BA), event coordinator and outside vendor supervisor shall be responsible for the following and adhering to all aspects of this guideline.
 - 3.1.2** Event coordinator must know the building's emergency procedures and location of fire protection equipment. (Exits, fire alarm pull stations, fire extinguishers)

4.0 PROCEDURES

4.1 Catering, food cooking and warming

- 4.1.1** Cooking: Cooking inside University properties using an open flame source such as gas, charcoal or wood must be confined to an approved kitchen containing the appropriate ventilation hood. Open flame cooking is not permitted in any portion of the building other than an approved kitchen.

4.1.1.1 Open flame cooking is not permitted inside of tents that are open to the public.

4.1.1.2 Portable Class K fire extinguisher(s) are required in kitchen areas.

4.1.2 Warming: All warming of food inside University properties not within an approved kitchen must take place in an appropriate area using electric equipment only, such as heating cabinets, electric chaffer, countertop food warmer, etc.

4.1.2.1 Methanol gel (Sterno) is not approved within the University's properties for the warming or cooking of food without first obtaining a permit/variance from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. [Sterno Permit](#)

4.1.2.2 Portable ABC fire extinguishers are required within 10 feet of food warming areas.

4.1.2.3 Chafing setups must never be left unattended. Heat application to food must constantly be supervised.

4.1.2.4 All electrical heating devices must be unplugged upon conclusion of the event.

4.2 Decorations

4.2.1 Decorations shall not be hung or in any way attached to fire protection equipment. (Sprinkler lines/heads, emergency lights, exit signs, etc.)

4.2.2 Decorations shall not obstruct any means of egress.

4.2.3 Decorations hung on walls and doors shall not cover more than ten percent of the wall or door it is hung on.

4.2.4 Table covers used beneath chaffing and cooking setups must be cotton fabric or other fire retardant material. Paper or plastic table coverings are not permitted beneath any heating device.

4.2.5 Table decorations must be flame resistant and kept a minimum of three feet from any heat source.

4.3 Exits

4.3.1 Exits and exit pathways must be visible, clearly marked and unobstructed at all times during the event and in no way blocked due to the situations of the event.

4.3.1.1 Catering tables, dining tables, chairs, makeshift stages, sound equipment, etc. shall not block the exit pathway or exits in any way.

4.3.2 Total available exit width must be maintained at all times during the event.

4.4 Occupant Load

4.4.1 Do not exceed the maximum allowable occupant load capacity.

4.5 Emergency Plan

4.5.1 All special events shall have an emergency plan and designated emergency plan coordinator.

4.5.2 Report emergencies to PennComm 215-573-3333

4.5.3 Contact the Division of Public Safety Department of Fire & Emergency Services if the special event will incorporate any of the following:

- Candles / Open flame - [Religious Candle Lighting](#)
- Food Trucks
- Fuel use / Storage
- Grilling - [Grilling Permit](#)
- Outdoor portable fireplaces - [Outdoor Portable Fireplace Permit](#)
- Pyrotechnics / Fireworks
- Smoke / Fog machine
- Tents / Canopies - [Religious Candle Lighting Tent Guideline](#)

5.0 GENERAL REFERENCES

5.1 2018 Philadelphia Fire Code F-308.1.6.2, F-308.1.9, F-308.3, F-1031.6, F-1031.7, F-1004, F-403

7.0 CONTACT INFORMATION

7.1 For question regarding this guideline contact Fire and Emergency Services at (215) 573-7857 or FES@publicsafety.upenn.edu