



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
San Antonio Fire Department – Fire Prevention Division
MEMORANDUM



TO: San Antonio Fire Department and Planning and Development Services
Department Associates and Customers

FROM: Earl Crayton, II – Assistant Chief – SAFD, Fire Marshal

DATE: March 31, 2011

FILE: Code Interpretation Manual

INTERPRETATION NUMBER: CI2011-002

TITLE: Special Events/Assembly Criteria

CODE EDITION: 2009 International Fire Code (IFC) as amended and adopted by the City of San Antonio, San Antonio Texas Code of Ordinances

SECTION: 202 General Definitions: Special Event

San Antonio Texas Code of Ordinances, Chapter 11- Fire Prevention, Article II-Fire Department, Section 11-16, Fees for certain permits and services. (a) (20). Special Event Inspection Fee

PURPOSE: Clarification of Special Events criteria and plan submittal requirements

DEFINITION: *“Special Event shall mean an indoor or outdoor event that, in the opinion of the Fire Code Official or their designee, meets any of the following criteria:*

- 1. Constitutes a use or occupant load ordinarily not permitted by the face of the Certificate of Occupancy*
- 2. Requires the means of egress to be altered from a configuration that was previously approved by the Building Code Official, Fire Code Official, or their designee (e.g., installation of booths, curtains, partitions, tables/chairs, etc. or the locking of select doors to limit access to portions of a building or area.*
- 3. Poses a condition that compromises any life safety systems that were previously approved by the Building Code Official, Fire Code Official, or their designee (e.g. reduced lighting, increased sound levels, installation of alternate interior finishes, etc.)*

4. *Poses a condition that reduces the effectiveness of public safety services of any kind (e.g. Conditions that result in reduced access to fire hydrants, sprinkler riser/pump rooms, Fire Department Connections, etc.).*

QUESTION 1: My venue was built as an “assembly” occupancy to hold events and I use a standard configuration for all events. Do I have to submit plans and pay for an inspection for each event?

ANSWER 1: No. Standard configurations that do not alter a previously approved egress plan, block exits or exits access, add excessive equipment or stages and booths, or increase the occupant load above what was previously approved are exempt from the inspection program once the standard configuration has been reviewed, approved, and a site inspection is conducted. The plan review and site inspection must be conducted for each standard configuration and the fee must be paid for each. An additional inspection and fee will be required for each event when any of the previously mentioned conditions in the definition are present or above and beyond what was previously approved in the standard configuration package:

Conditions that may compromise previously approved life safety systems or may reduce the effectiveness of public safety services.

1. Reduced lighting creating a desired effect.
2. Increased/high sound levels due to live or recorded performances.
3. Significant increase in fuel load by the installation of unapproved finishes or combustibles, site built combustible structures, or fuel powered vehicles displayed indoors.
4. Obstructed or reduced access to fire hydrants.
5. Obstructed or reduced access to sprinkler riser/fire pump rooms.
6. Obstructed or reduced access to Fire Department Connections.

Note: Any variation to an approved standard configuration requires fee payment, plan submittal/review, and the site inspection to verify code compliance.

Approved standard configurations are valid for one year and are subject to review for compliance at any time. Non-compliance with a previously approved standard configuration is a code violation and may be subject to the issuance of a citation for the venue owner/manager.

QUESTION 2: I have submitted plans for my event, paid the inspection fee, and have had my site visit. Now I am told I must have a Fire Inspector present at the event and I have to pay a city rate for him/her as well. Why?

ANSWER 2: Certain events may also require the presence of a certified Fire Inspector for a “fire watch” for public safety. The 2009 International Fire Code section 403.1 states:

“When in the opinion of the fire code official, it is essential for public safety in a place of assembly or any other place where people congregate, because of the number of persons, or the nature of the performance, exhibition, display, contest or activity, the owner, agent or lessee shall provide one or more fire watch personnel, as required and approved, to remain on duty during the times such places are open to the public, or when such activity is being conducted.”

The fire code official may require the fire watch for one or any combination of the above listed reasons or if any of the life safety systems installed in the venue are impaired for any reason. The fire watch is in the interest of public safety and may or may not be required after evaluation of the submitted plans and the site visit is conducted. Fire watch fee details can be found in *San Antonio Texas Code of Ordinances, Chapter 11- Fire Prevention, Article II- Fire Department, Section 11-16, Fees for certain permits and services (k) (2)*.

QUESTION 3: I have a 3,500 square foot event center that I rent out for weddings and parties. Am I subject to the “Special Event” inspection and fee?

ANSWER 3: No. You are subject to an inspection by the fire code official if there is reasonable cause that a code violation or safety hazard exists in your facility. However, facilities are subject to the “Special Event” inspection fee if the facility meets the criteria listed above and the venue is over five thousand (5,000) square feet. The fee would be two-hundred seventy-five dollars (\$275.00) for plan review and inspection for a facility greater than five thousand (5,000) square feet but less than, or equal to, fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet. Facilities over fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet are subject to the four hundred and twenty-five (\$425.00) “Special Event” inspection fee if the facility meets the criteria listed above.

QUESTION 4: My facility is approximately ten thousand (10,000) square feet. I seldom meet the listed criteria for a “Special Event”. Should I submit plans every time if I am not sure if I am subject to this inspection program?

ANSWER 4: No. However, you must have your standard configurations approved and you should consult the San Antonio Fire Department’s Special Events Office if you are unsure if should submit your plans for review. The SAFD Special Events staff (office: 210-207-3695) can meet with you to discuss which events would require the fee and inspections and which events would not. If your event does not meet the criteria listed in the “Special Events” definition, you will not be required to pay the fee and submit plans for review and inspection. You would be subject to inspection if the fire code official has reasonable cause to believe that code violations or hazards to public safety exist at your facility.



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