



# FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINE

<b>Title: Place of Assembly Requirements</b>		
<b>Number:</b> FPG-19	<b>Effective Date:</b> 01/01/2023	<b>Revised Date:</b> 03/01/2023
<b>Code References:</b> California Fire Code (CFC), California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 19, Merced Municipal Code (MMC), California Health & Safety Code		
<b>Note:</b> <i>This guideline is a summary of Fire Department clarifications and interpretations of City and State Codes and nationally recognized standards in accordance with the currently adopted edition of the Fire Code. Information contained herein applies to typical circumstances and may not address all situations.</i>		

### Scope

This Guideline has been developed to assist business owners and managers with state and local requirements for assembly uses.

### Codes and Guidelines

This guideline shall apply to assembly occupancies in accordance with the California Fire Code, California Code of Regulations, Title 19 and the Merced Municipal Code.

### Permit

An operational permit is required to operate a place of assembly.

### Definitions

**Assembly:** The gathering together of 50 or more persons for such purposes as deliberation, education, instruction, worship, entertainment, amusement, drinking or dining or awaiting transportation.

**Assembly Building:** A building or portion thereof used for the gathering together of 50 or more persons for such purposes as deliberation, education, instruction, worship, entertainment, amusement, drinking or dining or awaiting transportation. Any building or structure or portion thereof used or intended to be used for the showing of motion pictures when an admission fee is charged and when such building or structure is open to the public and has a capacity of 10 or more persons.

### Specific Requirements

#### **1. Occupant Load**

- a. The occupant load of assembly buildings or assembly areas shall be determined by the Fire Marshal or Chief Building Official.
- b. The occupant load of assembly buildings, rooms or spaces shall be posted in a conspicuous place, near the main exit or exit access doorway from the room or space. Posted signs shall be of a permanent design approved by the Fire Marshal and be properly maintained.

#### **2. Overcrowding**



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The number of occupants of any building, structure or portion thereof, shall not exceed the permitted or posted occupant load. Business management is responsible for maintaining a continuous and accurate count of the number of occupants. If an assembly area is overcrowded, the owner or management may be issued a citation and will be required to reduce the number of occupants to the permitted occupant load.

### 3. Exits

History has proven that inadequate, obstructed or otherwise inoperable exit ways or exit doors are the leading cause of loss of life or injury in assembly buildings. The following requirements shall be strictly enforced.

- a. The Fire Department will be checking to see that you have the proper number of exits, the proper door hardware, the proper type of exit signs, that exit signs and exit paths are properly illuminated, and that exits and exit corridors are not obstructed.
- b. Exit doors from assembly occupancies or areas must be equipped with panic hardware.
  - i. Exception: In places of religious worship and in assembly occupancies with an occupant load of 300 or less, the main exit may be equipped with a key-operated locking device provided the device is readily distinguishable as locked and the following sign is posted on the egress side on or adjacent to the door:

**THIS DOOR TO REMAIN UNLOCKED  
WHEN BUILDING IS OCCUPIED**

- c. Exit doors shall swing in the direction of egress.
- d. Illuminated exit signs and emergency lighting must be maintained in an operable condition.
- e. Sliding bolts, thumb latches, bars on doors, hasps and similar hardware are prohibited on exit doors, including after hours.

### 4. Decorative Materials

- a. All drapes, curtains, drops, and all other decorative material, including Christmas trees, that would tend to increase the fire and panic hazard shall be made from nonflammable material, or shall be properly treated and maintained in a flame retardant condition by means of a State Fire Marshal approved flame-retardant solution.
- b. Exits, exit lights, fire alarm pull stations, hose cabinets or fire extinguisher locations shall not be concealed, in whole or in part by any decorative material.

### 5. Open Flame Devices



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Open flame devices are prohibited in all assembly uses with the following exceptions if inspected and approved by the Fire Marshal.

- a. When necessary for ceremonial or theatrical purposes under such restrictions as may be deemed necessary to avoid danger of ignition of combustible materials or injury to occupants.
- b. In approved and stable candleholders on individual tables of dining establishments.
- c. Under no circumstances shall hand held open flame devices such as exposed candles be permitted for any purpose.

### **6. Special Events/Activities**

Special events or activities in assembly buildings or areas, including but not limited to the following, require approval by the Fire Marshal and in some cases additional Fire Code permits and an approved fire watch;

- a. Pyrotechnics, fireworks or special effects displays.
- b. Use of flammable or combustible liquids or gases.
- c. Theatrical performances using open flames.
- d. Flaming food and beverage preparation.
- e. Display of vehicles.

### **7. Live Entertainment Ticketed Events**

The owner or manager of any assembly building having an occupant load of less than 1,000 and a legitimate stage is required to make an announcement of the availability of emergency exits prior to the beginning of the live entertainment at ticketed events.

### **8. Fire Extinguishers**

- a. A minimum of one 2-A:10-B:C rated fire extinguisher is required on each floor level.
- b. Buildings in excess of 3,000 square feet or with other protection requirements may require additional units.
- c. All extinguishers must have a current State Fire Marshal service tag attached and be serviced annually or after each use, whichever occurs first.
- d. Extinguishers must be properly mounted in visible and accessible locations on each floor level.
- e. Extinguishers located in closets or behind doors must be identified by placing a sign on the door stating, "Fire Extinguisher Inside".

### **9. Electrical**



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- a. All exposed electrical wiring must be in continuous metallic raceways (conduit).
- b. All exposed electrical wiring that has been abandoned must be removed.
- c. A working space of not less than 30 inches in width, 36 inches in depth, and 78 inches in height shall be provided in front of all electrical panels and equipment.
- d. Empty circuit breaker spaces must be filled in, no tape is allowed over the circuit breakers, no damaged circuit breakers are permitted, and all circuits must be labeled.
- e. All junction boxes, electrical receptacles and outlets must be in good condition with covers secured in place.
- f. The use of multi-adapters and multi-plug extension cords is prohibited for most applications.
- g. Ensure all power taps or multi-adapters for use with computers, typewriters or similar desktop equipment are approved UL Listed devices and that the appliances do not exceed the rating of the adapter.
- h. Multiplug adapters not complying with the California Electrical Code shall be prohibited.
- i. Extension cords are allowed only for temporary use of portable equipment.

### 10. Heat Producing Appliances

- a. Remove combustibles and storage from heater areas.
- b. Provide adequate clearance between heat-producing appliances and combustibles.
- c. Gas appliances must have a separate shut-off and be vented to the outside of the building.
- d. Water heaters must have an approved pressure relief device.

### 11. General

- a. Every building must have the street address, including suite numbers, posted so that it is visible from the street fronting the property.



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- b. All compressed gas cylinders must be properly secured.

### 12. Fire Sprinkler Systems

- a. An 18-inch clearance must be maintained below all sprinkler heads (except for storage area along walls).
- b. Extra sprinkler heads and sprinkler wrench must be kept on the premises.
- c. Quarterly sprinkler system inspection to be performed by qualified persons. (Records to be maintained on site for review during inspection)
- d. Annual sprinkler system maintenance to be performed by a State Fire Marshal licensed company or person or a fire protection contractor (C-16). Records to be maintained on site for review during inspection.
- e. Five-Year sprinkler system test to be performed by a State Fire Marshal licensed company or person or a fire protection contractor (C-16). When requested, provide copy to City of Merced Fire Department once completed.
- f. Five-Year certification tag must be attached to the sprinkler riser or fire department connection.

### 13. Kitchens

- a. Commercial kitchen hoods must be free of grease, including all filters and ducts.
- b. Approved automatic extinguishing systems are required in commercial-type cooking equipment from which grease-laden vapors emanate in normal cooking application.
- c. Extinguishing systems must be serviced at least every six months or after activation, by a fire protection contractor (C-16) or a State Fire Marshal licensed company or person.
- d. A current certification tag must be attached to the extinguishing system.
- e. In addition, a "K" class fire extinguisher must be located within 30 feet of the cooking equipment.

### 14. Private Fire Hydrants

- a. All private fire hydrants shall be inspected/tested annually (flow test every 5 years) by a C-16 license holder.



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- b. A copy of the test results shall be maintained on premises and submitted to Compliance Engine.