



Pete Ricketts, Governor

Memo 20-39 from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Quality, Safety & Oversight Group (CMS QSO) provided notice that civil money penalty (CMP) funds have been set aside to help nursing homes make in-person visits possible. These funds may be used to buy tents for outdoor visits and/or clear dividers to create a physical barrier to lower the risk of transmission during in-person visits (indoors or outdoors). The memo also mandates compliance with Life Safety Code requirements. In light of this news, the Nebraska State Fire Marshal Agency has put together the following guidelines for temporary tent structures and clear dividers for in-person visits. This document will apply to any health care facility using tents and/or clear dividers for in-person visitation purposes.

**If a temporary tent is used for in-person visits, the following must be met:**

- The tent must meet NFPA 701 flame retardant test standards. There must be a tag affixed to the tent or documentation showing compliance with this standard
- The temporary tent is not permitted to be attached to the health care facility and must be placed at least 10 feet from any adjacent structure or tent
- Two widely spaced exits are required from a tent if the travel distance to reach an exit exceeds 100 feet. If two or more entrances/exits are provided, regardless of travel distance they all shall meet the following:
  - 41.5 inch clear width
  - A hard surface from all entrances/exits leading to a public way
  - The hard surface must be kept clear whenever the tent is occupied
  - Stakes and stake lines must not obstruct or reduce egress width or paths
- No Smoking signs must be posted at all tent entrances and exits
- If placed in or near a vehicle parking lot, barriers or other means to prevent collision must be provided
- The area in and around the tent for a distance of 10 feet shall be clear of combustible materials or vegetation (examples: straw or sawdust)
- Any flooring used in a tent must be noncombustible, fire-retardant treated or pass ASTM D 2859 testing. (No requirements if the tent is fire sprinkler protected)
- The facility emergency plan must include evacuation and protection of occupants

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- At least one staff member supervising a visitation tent must carry two-way communication equipment (cellphone)
- At least one multi-purpose portable fire extinguisher having a 2A rating must be provided in a visitation tent. Staff must be trained on its use and travel distance to reach an extinguisher cannot exceed 75 feet
- Exits must be clearly marked (lighted signs are not required)
- If electrical service is provided, emergency lighting must be provided within the tent
- Extension cords, if used must be commercial grade and sized to handle the entire draw. Extension cords cannot cause a trip hazard and cannot be daisy-chained.
- Clear dividers used to provide social distancing and reduce virus transmission must be placed so that egress is not obstructed
- If the tent has fire sprinkler or fire alarm protection, clear dividers cannot extend to within 18 inches of the ceiling or roof structure
- If a fire alarm system is not provided, battery-powered smoke alarms must be installed in the tent. Each alarm can cover an area not exceeding 30 feet by 30 feet

### Heating/Cooling

- Portable space heaters are not permitted in any tent or enclosed structure
- Any heating unit or appliance must be listed for its intended use and installed in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications
- Direct-fired heaters are not permitted within any tent or enclosed structure
  - Direct-fired heaters include patio heaters, salamanders or similar heaters with the fuel source and burner/heating element in one unit
- Propane tanks must be placed at least 5 feet from any tent or enclosed structure
- Carbon Monoxide detection must be placed in a tent or enclosed structure where heating is provided
- Indirect heating units are acceptable for use. Example:



- Portable fans are acceptable for use when:
  - Extension cords are not used
  - Egress is not obstructed
- Air conditioning units must be placed outside the tent similar to heating units (indirect)

Be aware that there may be other requirements from local authorities that must be met. Please contact them for more information. Ultimately, it is up to each facility to protect their residents from harm at their specific site. Please do not hesitate to contact the State Fire Marshal Agency with questions and/or concerns.