Tent Safety 101: Your Guide to Tent Safety

Tent weights must be attached to vendor tents at all times. In certain inclement weather conditions even properly secured tents can be precarious. If tents need to be taken down in the middle of the festival due to inclement weather, vendors should direct customers to move out of the way so they are not injured.

Weights should not cause a tripping hazard and should be tethered with lines that are clearly visible. Weights should have soft edges to avoid causing cuts and scrapes, all weights must be securely attached and weights should be on the ground, or midway to the canopy leg (not above people's heads)

Always be prepared

You should always have your canopy secured to the ground. It is not enough to have the tools necessary to secure your canopy on hand if you do not employ them.

Strong gusts can come up without warning anywhere, at any time. After your canopy takes flight and causes damage it is too late to decide to secure your canopy. You should assume winds will come. Indeed, they often do.

Always secure tents. During setup and breakdown periods tents are vulnerable to wind. Stay alert. During the peak business hours of markets, the mere presence of hundreds of shoppers, along with the tight configuration of all the vendors, creates a disruption in the flow of wind, reducing its force through the festival area.

But at setup and breakdown times, the shoppers are gone, the solid block of vendors is disrupted, and you are at some point in the process of setting up or taking down your canopy.

You must be sure to completely secure your canopy as soon as you set it up, and take down your canopy as soon as you remove its weights at the end of the day.

Do NOT let yourself be interrupted by ANYTHING in the middle of this process, as a half-secured canopy is as dangerous, if not more dangerous, than an unsecured canopy.

Examples of good canopy weights

Filling an empty bucket (2.5 gallon works great) with cement and tying this to each corner of the tent with a rope or bungee. It is NOT sufficient to place the bucket on the feet of the canopy.

Filling buckets/containers with sand/cement that can be anchored or secured with a rope or bungee; these include canvas bags or plastic buckets/containers that have a handle through which a rope or bungee can be secured.

It is expected that the vendor tents be secured either by tethering or by the use of weights. If using weights, there needs to be at least 20 lbs. of weight on each tent leg.

Please follow your tent manufacturer's guidelines. It is generally recommended and in the absence of available manufacturers safety guidelines that 40 lbs. of weight be used. The most important point is that doing nothing is not acceptable.

PVC pipe capped and filled with cement can be hung on the inside of canopy poles as long as it is secured so that it does not collide with customers, nor swing around like a pendulum. The best weights are strapped to the bottom of each leg, and then tethered via a bungee to the top corner of the canopy, thus lowering the center of gravity of the canopy.

In a strong gust of wind, even tents secured with enough weight, can be broken if the weights are not suspended from the top corners of the canopy.

Examples of Bad Canopy Weights

Gallon water jugs are not heavy enough for large gusts of wind. One gallon of water weights 8 pounds. One gallon of water on each corner would be the equivalent of a 3 year old child trying to hold down a 100 square foot parachute.

Tying tents, tents or umbrellas to tables, coolers or vehicles provides tripping hazards and frequently does not provide adequate weight. Vendor safety is just as important as customer safety.

Sandbags that cannot be placed upright and securely tied to the tent or canopy should not be used.

In addition to not providing enough grip to prevent a canopy from taking flight in a strong gust of wind, tent stakes are barely visible to shoppers and can cause a serious tripping hazard to an unsuspecting customer.

Never use cement blocks. They are hard, easy to trip over, and are very effective toe and shin breakers.
At all costs, avoid stretched out cords and lines. Customers and their children will get them wrapped around their arms or legs, causing them to trip and fall, and perhaps pull over your displays in the process

MAPLE RIDGE
British Columbia

Deep Roots Greater Heights

Your Pop-Up Tent

Weigh It Down

Guidelines from the Maple Ridge Fire Department.
For more details call
604-463-5880

Weigh it down

The tent you use at any event is common place.

What is not known is that even a small amount of wind can send a tent sailing across the landscape or even across the road.

Most accidents at Festivals and other events involve wind blown tents, tents and umbrellas. Each leg of the tent needs to be correctly and evenly weighted in order to avoid damage to the tent or your product and other problems such as personnel injury.

ACCEPTABLE TYPES OF TENT WEIGHTS

SUSPENDED VS. SECURED TO BASE OF LEG

Canopy weights can be either suspended from the top corners of the tent or secured to the base of each leg.

It is very important to secure the weights around each leg with a bungee cord or rope so that it will not be able to swing like a pendulum.

STORE BOUGHT WEIGHTS

Store bought weights can be purchased in a myriad of types; that you suspend from the top corners of your craft tent; weights that you secure to the base of each tent leg; fillable weights may be emptied and filled with sand and/or water;

Weights that consist of cement plates, which are secured to the base of your tent leg, require no filling.

HOMEMADE WEIGHTS

Many professional craft artists use their own homemade systems for weighting tents. Homemade canopy weights are typically slightly less expensive than store bought weights, and they can be custom made to specifically meet your particular needs. Store bought weights, on the other hand, are extremely convenient, and they are typically not that much more expensive to buy when compared with the cost of making your own tent weights.

MAKE YOUR OWN TENT WEIGHTS

If you plan to make your own tent weights, there are a few solutions that people have used

PVC PIPE WEIGHTS

PVC pipes filled with concrete (or sometimes sand), are used by many craft artists.
To make your own PVC pipe tent weights you will need:

1. PVC pipe (preferably white)
2. Concrete such at Quikrete
3. End caps.
4. Eye bolts

To make your own PVC pipe weights, simply fill a length of 3-4 inch PVC pipe with concrete (Quikrete is a popular brand and is available at many home building supply stores). Look for white PVC pipe, which will blend in with your white craft tent better than other colors. The length and diameter of the pipe you choose will depend on how much you want the pipe to weigh.

Although many people aim for 40 pounds of weight on each leg, you may want to create 8 pipes that weigh 20 pounds each (i.e. two weights for each leg) instead of 4 pipes that weigh 40 pounds because the 20 pound weights will be easier to manage. If you go to a home building supply store that provides good customer service, they will be able to help you do the math on the amount of concrete (and, therefore, the size of PVC pipe) you will need to create the amount of weight you want. Secure end caps onto one end of each PVC tube. Mix the concrete according to directions, and pour into the PVC pipes.

After you pour the mixed concrete in the pipe, and before it sets, insert a ring bolt into each weight, which will allow you to hang the weights from the corners of your tent. Many people use bungee cords to hang their weights. You need to ensure they are secured well, especially around the base of each leg so as not to allow the PVC tube to ever swing like a pendulum.