

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT GUIDE for PUBLIC ASSEMBLY EVENTS

Information Contained in this Document

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Event Staff/Crowd Managers	Generators	Open Flames	Public Assembly Self-Check Form	Exits

Information and Assistance

General Information for Event Planning	<p>Planning for all events should begin by contacting the University Unions and Student Activities (UUSA) Event Services Office at phone 231-5005 or http://www.uusa.vt.edu/eventpln/index.htm</p>		
Fire and Life Safety	<p>All persons planning public assembly events are encouraged to contact EHSS Fire Safety personnel for information and assistance. Consultation is available by telephone, email, meeting, and at the event site.</p> <p>In order to comply with the requirements of the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code, it is necessary for EHSS Fire Safety personnel and/or the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) to make certain approvals as noted in these guidelines. Required approvals and inspections should be requested as far in advance as possible.</p> <p>The Fire Safety Engineer and/or Inspector are required to be present for certain events such as indoor pyrotechnics, outdoor fireworks, and large scale events. The sponsors and/or Virginia Tech Police Department (VTPD) also provide services for events that may have security concerns upon request.</p> <p>There is no charge for event planning, consultations, or random inspections performed by EHSS. A fee <i>may</i> be charged when the VTPD or other responsible departments need to provide services after normal working hours or when additional personnel are needed to oversee an event.</p> <table style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Fire Safety Engineer (540) 231-9068</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Fire Protection Inspector (540) 231-4207</td> </tr> </table>	Fire Safety Engineer (540) 231-9068	Fire Protection Inspector (540) 231-4207
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	(540) 231-3944 FAX Email: firesafe@vt.edu
Definition of Public Assembly	<p>Public assembly events involve various risk factors associated with having large numbers of people in one location. The primary risk factors are the high occupant density; occupants that are not familiar with the building, and in some cases reduced lighting levels within the venue. These risks can be managed through proper event planning and management.</p> <p>The Virginia State Fire Prevention Code defines public assembly occupancy as follows:</p> <p><i>Assembly occupancies include but are not limited to, all buildings or portions of buildings, used for gathering together 50 or more persons for such purposes as deliberation, worship, entertainment, eating, drinking, amusement, or awaiting transportation.</i></p> <p>Examples of assembly occupancies found on the Virginia Tech campus include, but are not limited to, large meeting rooms and classrooms, auditoriums with fixed or loose chair seating, multi-purpose rooms, concert halls, theaters, sports arenas, field houses, restaurants, bars, and libraries.</p>
Tents Are Considered Buildings	<p>Tents must meet most of the same requirements as buildings. Please see the section on Tents and Virginia Tech Policy and Procedure No. 5406 - <i>Requirements for Temporary Facilities/Tents/ Stages</i> at: http://www.policies.vt.edu/5406.pdf.</p>
Outdoor Spaces	<p>Enclosed open areas such as Lane Stadium must meet the same requirements as buildings. Fenced open areas must have at least two exits—or more, depending upon the number of people within the enclosure. The VT Building Code Engineer must certify bleachers, grandstands and platforms as structurally sound if they are constructed on-site.</p>
Large Scale Events	<p>All events intended to, or that have the potential to, attract large crowds must be coordinated through a number of university departments and divisions. These include but are not limited to: UUSA-Events Planning, VTPD, Parking Services, Facilities Management, Virginia Tech Rescue Squad, Schiffert Health Center, and EHSS.</p>

Fire and Life Safety Planning and Management Information

Room Capacity	<p>Information on campus room capacities may be obtained from UUSA – Event Planning, the Registrar’s Office or Facilities Management. EHSS Fire Safety personnel determine the legal capacities according to Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) and Statewide Uniform Building Code for existing buildings/areas. Be aware that the occupant load is the maximum capacity. Please contact EHSS Fire Safety to affirm the maximum occupant load for a particular space.</p>
Exits	<p>The number of exits required from the room/area is based on the capacity. Please contact EHSS Fire Safety to affirm the number of exits required for a space involving a particular activity.</p>
	<p>Exits must remain unobstructed and provide clear access to the outside at all times. Wires or cables are not permitted to be placed in</p>

	front of exits or on steps. All wires or cables on floors must be properly taped down or covered to avoid creating tripping hazards.
Set-up Plans	The placement of stages, seats, equipment (including wiring), and security arrangements affect the exits and access to exits.
	Standard set-up plans exist for the Cassell Coliseum, Lane Stadium, various assembly areas in Squires Student Center, Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center, Rector Field House, and the dining halls. The management of the respective facilities maintains these plans. Set-up plans for other spaces, spaces that are not routinely used for public assembly (including lobbies and atriums), or any plans that are different from existing standard plans must be reviewed in advance by EHSS Fire Safety personnel for conformance with the SFPC.
	With assembly events of more than 200 persons where temporary seating will be used, it is recommended that the seating be fastened together in groups of three and not exceeding seven. The VT Building Code Engineer must certify temporary bleachers and platforms as structurally sound.
	The use of “festival” style seating (e.g., general admission without the use of actual seats) is prohibited for venues that have an occupant load of 1000 or greater.
Special Amusement Buildings	Any building or portion of a building that is permanent, temporary, or mobile that is occupied for amusement, entertainment or educational purposes and is arranged such that the means of egress to an exit is not readily apparent due to visual or audio distractions is a ‘special amusement building’. Examples include haunted houses and carnival amusement trailers. EHSS Fire Safety personnel must approve all special amusement venues; guidance on this issue can be obtained by calling the Fire Safety Engineer at 231-9068.
Expositions	Expositions of products or other displays have a number of special requirements. Contact EHSS Fire Safety personnel for guidance on this issue.
Exit Notices (Announcements)	<p>The person in charge of a theater or place of assembly is required to call the attention of everyone present, immediately before the beginning of an event, to the location of exits and to state that the exits are not locked. The person in charge must also announce the following:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>“Notice. For your own safety, look for the nearest exit. In case of emergency, walk, do not run, to that exit.”</i></u></p> <p>This requirement can be met by any of the following methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notices made orally 2. Notices shown on the cinema screen 3. Notices printed on the back of a program (by itself, in 1/4 inch high letters) 4. Notices displayed on a fixed sign visible from all points in an assembly room.
Decorations and Theatrical Scenery	All materials used for decorations and theatrical scenery, including the drop used behind stages during concerts, must be Class “A” rated for

	<p>flame spread. Foamed plastics and materials must meet the requirements of the SFPC; if such materials are to be used, please contact EHSS for guidance. Sponsors, promoters, or other production personnel must have documentation that certifies that the material meets this requirement. EHSS Fire Safety personnel may ask to see these certificates prior to the start of an event. If there is no documentation to certify that the material is acceptable, EHSS will either disapprove this material and ask for an immediate removal or require additional testing conducted by an approved institution/laboratory. Decorations must not block exits or fire safety equipment, nor impede the function of the fire curtain if one is present.</p>
Open Flames	<p>EHSS Fire Safety personnel must approve open flames used during public assembly events for any purposes other than decoration and cooking (unless otherwise noted). This includes, but is not limited to, any open flame used in the course of a performance. (See Open Flames and Burning section in the Fire and Life Safety Program.)</p> <p>Open flames used for decoration and cooking must comply with the table below. Users are required to have adequate safety precautions and are encouraged to contact EHSS Fire Safety personnel for consultation.</p>
- Candles and Decorative Devices	<p>Candles and decorative devices have a number of special requirements. Contact EHSS Fire Safety personnel for guidance on this issue.</p>
- Cooking	<p>Equipment fueled by small heat sources that can be readily extinguished by water, such as candles or alcohol-burning equipment, including solid alcohol may be used.</p>
	<p>Flamed dishes, such as cherries jubilee or crepe suzette, may be used, provided that EHSS Fire Safety personnel have approved the precautions that will be taken.</p>
	<p>Small portable LP gas cooking equipment (less than 2 lbs) may be used under the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Equipment must be listed for indoor use in commercial restaurants by an approved listing agency such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual Systems (FM). · Equipment must be used in strict accordance with the manufacturers and listing agency's instructions including replacement fuel and parts. · Employees working with portable butane gas stoves must be instructed on the proper use of the stoves. A trained employee must be in attendance at all times that the stoves are used by customers. · Portable gas stoves, when used, must be placed on noncombustible surfaces and kept clear of surrounding combustibles
Performing Arts	<p>Small open flames used by outdoor performers, such as jugglers, are approved on a case-by-case basis. Contact EHSS Fire Safety personnel to arrange a review of your proposal. Performers must be prepared to demonstrate their safety procedures and may be required</p>

	to have certificates of insurance.
Open Fires (outdoors)	Any open fire, with the exception of small-contained cooking fires, requires an Open Flames and Burning Permit in accordance with the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (Sec. F-403.4.2) and written permission from EHSS. Additional information on Open Burn Permits can be found on page 24.
	Open fires are limited to the dimensions of 5' X 5' X 5' and must be at least 50 feet from buildings and other exposures. Open fires may also need approval by Facilities Management Grounds Department and/or the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Open fires are limited to the hours between 4:00pm - 12:00 midnight. Other environmental restrictions may also apply. The Open Burn Permit includes directions for obtaining necessary approvals.
	Cooking fires, which do not require a permit, must be at least 15 feet from buildings and be located so that smoke does not enter buildings.
Pyrotechnics/ Fireworks	The indoor and outdoor use of pyrotechnics is strictly regulated and requires proper approval and permits. See page 27 for information.
Fog Machines	<p>The use of fog machines during a performance, dance, or other public assembly event may activate smoke detectors and/or obscure exits. Areas where fog machines are going to be used must be evaluated so that accidental activation of the fire alarm system or obscuring of exits is avoided. Contact EHSS Fire Safety personnel to arrange an evaluation of your proposal. In most cases a Special Effects Permit will need to be secured for the activity.</p> <p>In some cases, smoke detectors may need to be temporarily shut down in the area where a fog machine is used. Facilities Management needs at least a 4-week advance notification to schedule an outage. A "fire watch" during the period in which the smoke detectors are temporarily out of service may also be required.</p>
Event Staff/ Crowd Managers	Crowd Managers are responsible for maintaining clear exits, assuring that there is no overcrowding, initiating a fire alarm if necessary, directing occupants to exits, and providing general fire and life safety awareness. A minimum of 1 Crowd Manager is required for every 250 occupants. Crowd Managers may be comprised of ushers, house managers, gate personnel, security personnel, police aides, or police officers. Employees or attendees of assembly occupancies must be trained in emergency evacuation procedures and practice this training during drills. They must also be instructed in the proper use of portable fire extinguishers and other manual fire suppression equipment, where provided. EHSS personnel are available to provide training for all persons with this responsibility.
Post Event Procedures	At least one person should be responsible for completing a post event check. Items to check for include verifying that: all smoking materials (where smoking is allowed) and open flames have been safely extinguished (where open flames are approved); unnecessary electrical equipment has been turned off; and, any obviously hazardous condition has been corrected. This is extremely important in Greek houses and other residential facilities.

Generators	Generators must meet all electrical code requirements including proper grounding. All wires that may pose a tripping hazard must be covered or otherwise secured. Generators must be located so that exhaust does not enter buildings or tents.
Insurance	Proof of insurance is required for outside groups/events that come to the university. Events sponsored by university student groups that pose substantial risks to non-university participants (i.e., auto rallies, car smashing, fire jumping) may also require proof of insurance. Insurance issues may be handled as part of a contract for events such as concerts. The Insurance & Risk Management Office (540/231-7439) can provide information on University insurance issues.
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	As an organizer of an event on campus, you must assure that emergency services (e.g. police, rescue squad, fire department) are notified in advance and can be summoned in the event of an emergency. For events where a public or pay telephone is not immediately accessible, you are expected to assure that a cell phone or similar means is available on site to summon emergency services.
	Organizers of events should consider whether it would be prudent to have emergency medical services on standby at the event. If you wish such coverage, you must contact the Virginia Tech Rescue Squad (VTRS) at least 14 days in advance of the event. The decision to provide stand-by coverage is at the discretion of the VTRS. The form to request the services of the VTRS is available at http://filebox.vt.edu/org/vtrescue/Standby.html
	The university may require that EMS be available for certain size/type events. The number and level of EMS required will determined by the VTPD, Schiffert Health Center and VTRS in consultation with EHSS during pre-event planning. Events of over 2000 or 7000 persons will generally be required to have a minimum of one or two ambulance(s) on-site respectively.

SUMMARY OF REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS RECEIVED THROUGH EHSS - FIRE SAFETY

Remember all events must first be initiated through UUSA Events Planning

ITEM	REQUIRED
Set-up Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EHSS Fire Safety and/or - Occupational Safety assistance.
Indoor Pyrotechnics/Outdoor Fireworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State Fire Marshal Office approval for a Pyrotechnics/Fireworks Permit - EHSS Fire Safety notification
Open Flames (indoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EHSS Fire Safety approval for an Open Burn Permit
Open Fires (outdoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EHSS Fire Safety approval for an Open Burn Permit and - VT Grounds Department approval
Tents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flame retardant certification, - Structural integrity certification, - State Tent Permit required, (if size is over 900 square feet) - Fire Inspection after erection but before use.
Decorations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flame retardant certification, - Structural integrity certification, - Fire inspection, as determined by EHSS Fire Safety Division
Temporary Bleachers, Grandstands, and Seating (Indoor and Outdoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structural integrity certification by the VT Building Code Engineer
Special Amusement Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EHSS Fire Safety personnel approval
Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Certificate for pyrotechnics/fireworks, - Outside groups, - Events with substantial risk

**Public Assembly Event
Self-Check Form
*Fire and Life Safety***

Fire - Police - Rescue 911
VTPD Non-emergency (540) 231-6411
EHSS Fire Safety – (540) 231-9068 or 4207

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ LOCATION: _____

EVENT: _____ PERSON DOING CHECK: _____

Exit announcement read, displayed or posted? Yes No (If “no”, arrange to provide the required announcement.)

Exit doors clear and unobstructed (on both sides)? Yes No (If “no”, remove the obstructions.)

Exit paths clear and unobstructed all the way to outside? Yes No (If “no”, remove the obstructions.)

Wires taped down or otherwise secured? Yes No n/a (If “no”, tape down or otherwise cover the wires.)

Aisles clear and unobstructed? Yes No (If “no”, remove the obstructions.)

Exit lights on and unobstructed? Yes No (If “no”, remove the obstructions.)

Emergency lights unobstructed? Yes No (If “no”, remove the obstructions.)

Floor set-up approved? Yes No n/a (If “no”, contact EHSS immediately.)

Fire protection equipment unobstructed? Yes No (If “no”, remove the obstructions from:

- Fire alarm pull stations;
- Fire alarm horns, bells or speakers, and strobe lights; fire extinguishers.)

Decorations non-flammable? Yes No n/a (If “no”, remove the materials.)

Use of open flames approved? Yes No n/a (If “no”, extinguish and do not use.)

Use of pyrotechnics approved? Yes No (If “no” - contact EHSS immediately)

Crowd managers in place? Yes No (If “no”, contact EHSS.)

- 1 crowd manager for every 250 occupants

Tents have proper certification and permits if required? Yes No n/a

- Contact EHSS Fire Safety for fire inspection prior to occupancy
- Flame retardant certification required at site
- Structural integrity

Emergency Medical Services in place? Yes No (If “no”, contact the VTRS.)

Post-event check completed? Yes No (If “no”, perform post event check.)

- Smoking materials safely extinguished (where smoking is allowed)
- Approved open flames safely extinguished
- Unnecessary electrical equipment turned off
- No obvious hazards