

OUTDOOR DINING SAFETY

ALLIANZ RISK CONSULTING



As a result of the COVID pandemic, operations have added outdoor seating to their facilities.

Outdoor dining, conducted under a canopy or enclosed tent poses certain risks to patrons and staff.

- The tent location must be approved by the local authority, which could be the local building department or fire department official.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) offers the following:

Special consideration should be given to ensure the tent:

- Does not block fire department access
- Is not located too close to the building or lot lines
- Does not block the means of egress from other buildings

- Has at least a ten foot distance around the tent free of combustible materials
- Meets NFPA 701 flame propagation performance requirements. This test is performed on the fabric of the tent by a testing organization that will issue a certificate if the fabric has passed the test.

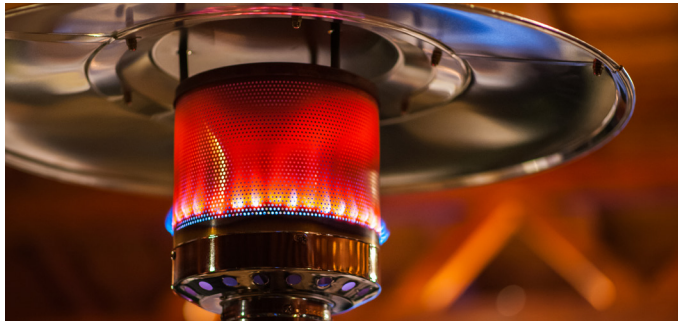
It is important to determine the number of occupants in the space to ensure that there are an appropriate number of exits providing adequate exit capacity.

Additional egress features to consider include:

- Are exits clearly marked?
- Is the tent required to have emergency lighting?
- Are all the exits accessible and clear of obstructions?

Smoking should never be allowed within the tent and **“No Smoking”** signs should be clearly posted.

With fall and winter approaching, many restaurants will look to improve patron comfort by adding propane fueled patio heaters.



Patio heaters require special handling and attention while in use to avoid fires and carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Always use patio heaters in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions and with the approval of the local authority, which could be the local building department or fire department official.
- Patio heaters are designed for use OUTDOORS only. Do not install inside an enclosed structure, such as a tent, to avoid possible carbon monoxide poisoning of diners and staff members.
- When selecting a patio heater make certain it is equipped with an anti-tilt feature and automatic gas shut off.
- Be sure that all staff members are familiarized with the safe operations of a patio heater.
- When using a patio heater special attention must be paid to the distance to combustible materials such as awnings over overhanging structural elements. Special attention must be paid to umbrellas and other combustible materials such as tablecloths and decorations when the patio heater is in use as they can be blown into the heater by gusts of wind.
- A clearly marked fire extinguisher should be kept on the patio at all times.
- Placing the patio heater too close to windows and air intakes poses a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning to occupants of the building.
- Do not place the patio heater in front of fire escapes or in an exit pathway. Additionally, do not block firefighting equipment, such as fire extinguishers, fire hydrants or fire department connections with the patio heater.
- Make certain that the patio heater is stable and placed on a level surface so it cannot be knocked over. Additional measures should be taken to ensure the unit is secured and not able to be tipped or moved.
- Never move the patio heater when the flame is lit. The fuel supply should be turned off and the unit fully cooled before it is relocated to another safe location.
- Never leave patio heaters unattended. Remember, there is an open flame inside the unit. Special attention should be paid when there are children present.
- Never store propane cylinders inside. Cylinders should be stored outdoors in an upright position within a locked, vehicle proof enclosure, away from smoking areas.
- Be cautious when moving cylinders to avoid dropping and causing a leak.

Helpful Links:

<https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Coronavirus/CoronavirusTentFactSheet.ashx>

<https://www.nfpa.org/coronavirus>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>

https://www.usfa.fema.gov/coronavirus/planning_response/covid19-outdoor-popup-dining.html

<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/operations/infograms/100820.html>

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Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty SE, Fritz-Schäffer-Strasse 9, 81737 Munich, Germany

Commercial Register: Munich, HRB 208312