

Fair & Exhibit Requirements

2025 California Fire Code - Indoor trade shows, exhibitions, and related event safety

Purpose. This handout summarizes fire and life-safety considerations for indoor fairs, trade shows, exhibitions, vendor halls and display areas. It focuses on event layouts, booth construction, decorations, vehicles, LP-gas, cooking, hazardous materials and egress.

1. Applicability and Appendix N

The 2025 California Fire Code includes Appendix N for indoor trade shows and exhibitions. Appendix provisions are supplemental and are not automatically enforceable everywhere unless adopted or otherwise made applicable by the authority having jurisdiction. Even where Appendix N is not locally adopted, the main body of the CFC still regulates means of egress, open flames, hazardous materials, fire protection systems, electrical hazards and other event conditions.

Outdoor fairs, tents and membrane structures are addressed separately under CFC Chapter 31 and the department handout titled Special Events, Tents & Canopies.

Code reference: 2025 CFC Appendix N; Chapters 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 31 and 50-67

2. Fire Safety Planning and Event Staffing

- A fire safety and evacuation plan is required by Appendix N when applicable, unless the fire code official determines the exhibition does not create an increased public-safety hazard.
- Fire watch personnel can be required when the number of people or the nature of the performance, exhibition or display makes a dedicated watch necessary for public safety.
- Events with more than 1,000 people require trained crowd managers in accordance with the applicable CFC crowd-manager provisions.
- Event staff should know how to report a fire, initiate evacuation, identify exits and keep fire department access routes clear.

Code reference: 2025 CFC Appendix N §N103; CFC §§403 and 404

3. Booths, Displays and Decorative Materials

Exhibit booth finishes, decorative materials, furnishings and decorative vegetation must comply with CFC Chapter 8. Appendix N establishes enhanced finish classifications for exhibit-booth wall and ceiling finishes.

Code reference: 2025 CFC Appendix N §N104; CFC Chapter 8

Building condition	Exhibit booth wall/ceiling finish
Building not sprinklered throughout	Class A interior finish
Building sprinklered throughout	Not less than Class B interior finish

4. Vehicles and Fueled Equipment

- Vehicle displays must be arranged so that exits, aisles, fire protection equipment and emergency access remain unobstructed.
- For liquid- or gas-fueled vehicles in indoor exhibition areas, fuel quantity is limited to not more than one-quarter tank or 5 gallons, whichever is less, when the Appendix N vehicle-display provisions apply.
- Fuel systems must be checked for leaks. Fuel-tank openings must be locked or sealed as required. Fueling and defueling inside exhibition buildings is prohibited.
- Vehicle batteries are rendered inoperable or disconnected as required by the applicable Appendix N vehicle provisions. Alternative-fuel and electric vehicles may require additional controls based on the vehicle and display arrangement.
- Fueled equipment other than vehicles is regulated by CFC Section 313 and any applicable fuel-specific chapters.

Code reference: 2025 CFC Appendix N §N107; CFC §313

5. LP-Gas, Cooking and Open Flames

- LP-gas containers used in indoor exhibition areas are subject to CFC Chapter 61 and Appendix N limitations.
- Where Appendix N applies, LP-gas containers exceeding 12 pounds water capacity are prohibited in the exhibition area.
- Where more than one LP-gas container is present in the same area, containers must be separated by at least 20 feet and secured against movement or tipping.
- Cooking and open-flame devices must comply with CFC Section 308 and the California Mechanical Code as applicable.
- Cooking equipment must be separated at least 5 feet from combustible display materials and storage when Appendix N applies.
- Appropriate portable fire extinguishers must be accessible for the hazards present, including Class K protection where required for commercial cooking.

Code reference: 2025 CFC Appendix N §N107; CFC §§308, 906 and Chapter 61

6. Means of Egress and Fire Protection

- Exit doors, aisles and corridors must remain continuously available and unobstructed whenever the public is present.
- No storage is permitted in exhibit-area aisles or corridors where Appendix N applies.
- The exhibit layout must account for anticipated crowd movement and cannot reduce required egress capacity.
- Fire extinguishers, fire alarm devices, sprinkler control valves, hose connections and fire department connections must remain visible and accessible.
- Booth construction or displays must not interfere with sprinkler discharge patterns, smoke detection, exit signs or emergency lighting.

Code reference: 2025 CFC Appendix N §N108; CFC Chapters 9 and 10

7. Pre-Opening Checklist

- Approved floor plan/layout available when required.
- Exit doors and aisles clear and identified.
- Booth and decorative materials comply with required flame-performance classifications.
- Vehicles and fueled equipment prepared for indoor display.
- LP-gas cylinders approved, secured and properly separated.
- Cooking/open-flame operations approved and separated from combustibles.
- Required extinguishers installed and accessible.
- No storage in aisles, corridors or required fire department access areas.
- Fire-safety staff, crowd managers or fire watch in place when required.

Primary References

- 2025 California Fire Code, Appendix N - Indoor Trade Shows and Exhibitions (supplemental unless adopted/referenced)
- 2025 California Fire Code, Chapters 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 31 and 50-67
- 2025 California Fire Code §308 - Open Flames and §906 - Portable Fire Extinguishers

This handout is an informational summary. It does not replace the adopted code, approved plans, permit conditions, State licensing requirements, or determinations of the fire code official. Project-specific requirements may vary.