

TENTED EVENT SAFETY: Evacuation Plans in Action

TOMMY WILSON, CERP
ALL OCCASIONS EVENT RENTAL
CINCINNATI, OHIO & LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

SESSION SPONSOR:



1



2

POSSUM HOLLOW FARM

In 2018, All Occasions was contracted to provide tenting, flooring, and other rental items for an October wedding and reception to be held for 200 guests on the family farm.



Today I will be using this event to illustrate how we manage evacuation plans and how we work with a client in a tough situation. It is human nature to run into any shelter in a storm. It is our job as tent professionals to help our clients understand the limitations of our product, and to help them devise viable solutions for severe weather.

3

This is the tent evacuation addendum we had written by James Waite. I believe every tent rental company should have something like this included in their contract.

At the end of the day, a tent is a temporary structure, and it doesn't matter what wind speed rating it has. Once the wind is higher than 30-38 mph there are too many hazards to safely stay inside any tent. In many cases, it's not that the wind is blowing – it's a question of *what* the wind is blowing.

We try to have this conversation with our clients at some point during the site inspection. This helps manage their expectations and lets them know that a tent is not a storm shelter. We find being upfront about it helps build trust with our clients. You don't want it to be a surprise when you ask them to sign your contract.

EVACUATION PLAN GUIDELINES

OSHA Regulation, 29 CFR Section 1910.38 sets forth the requirements for an Emergency Evacuation Plan.

The tent(s), booth(s), inflatable(s) and/or other temporary structure(s) you have rented from The All Occasions Group, Inc., an Ohio corporation, d/b/a All Occasions Event Rental (hereinafter, "ACOR," "Lessor," "we," "us," and "our") will be erected to provide temporary accommodations for your event. Temporary structures can provide protection from moderate weather, but are not designed for use as shelter in severe weather. Consequently, the Rented Item(s) may need to be evacuated in the event of severe weather and/or other emergency situations. It is your ("Contractor" or "Lessee's") responsibility to ensure your guests' safety. ACOR comments that you develop an emergency evacuation plan so you are prepared to act decisively in the event of an emergency during your event. Following are suggested guidelines for developing an emergency evacuation plan.

Situation	Why you may need to evacuate
Lightning	The temporary structure is not grounded.
High / Gusty Winds (over 30 mph) (40 mph)	It subjects structure to forces beyond its limitations; the structure cannot protect occupants from flying debris.
Excessive Rain	It subjects structure to forces beyond its limitations; saturation of ground with water may compromise securement.
Ice or Snow	It subjects structure to forces beyond its limitations.
Storm Accumulation	It subjects structure to forces beyond its limitations.
Ice Storm	It subjects structure to forces beyond its limitations.
Flooding	Saturation of ground with water may compromise securement.
Smoke, Fire or Explosion	The structure cannot protect occupants from excessive heat, flames or flying debris, and may trap smoke, gas or other harmful airborne substances.
Gas Leak	A LEAKY GAS LEAKS THE RISK OF FIRE OR EXPLOSION. Atmospheric conditions may not be suitable for occupants.
Risk, War, Commotion, Civil Unrest, Terrorism	Structure cannot protect occupants from physical harm due to riot, war, commotion, civil unrest, terrorism or threats thereof.
Earth Movement (i.e., seismic conditions)	Ground conditions may not be suitable for occupants and may compromise the structure's integrity, stability or securement.

Note: This is not an all-inclusive list. You and your guest person(s) should determine any and all emergency conditions that could arise during your event.

BEFORE YOUR EVENT:

1. Emergency Weather: Work with your guest person(s) to determine where guests will seek shelter if necessary:
 - Identify a nearby permanent building large enough to accommodate your guests, or if no such building is available, another form of reasonably safe shelter on other location recommended by the National Weather Service or Emergency Alert System to serve as an emergency shelter.
 - Make sure the building will be open and accessible during your event.
 - Determine how guests will get there (e.g., the route to take, travel by foot or car, etc.).
 - Make a note of the building's address in case you have to call for emergency assistance.
2. Communication: Make sure you have telephone and other methods of communication in the event of a outage. Pre-program emergency numbers in your mobile phone so you can act quickly to call police and/or emergency response personnel if necessary. Depending on the size of your event, backup communications may be needed in situations where there is no electrical power, cell phone signals are interrupted, etc.

3. Your Designated Point Person(s) will be Responsible for:
 - Monitoring a weather source (such as the National Weather Service) two or more hours before your event begins, checking specifically for <https://www.weather.gov/forecast>
 - Checking whether or not to proceed with the event under the tent(s) based on that information.
 - Checking each tented structure for any changes since installation (for example, stakes pulling out of the ground, loose pipes or straps etc.).

If you notice anything unusual call us immediately using our emergency number: 513-663-0500, option 7.

DURING YOUR EVENT:

4. Monitor the weather, and implement your EVACUATION PLAN IF ANY ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING OCCURS:
 - Severe Weather Alert: If a Severe Weather Alert is posted by the National Weather Service.
 - Lightning Strike: If lightning strikes within 1 mile (count of less than 5 seconds between lightning and thunder).
 - Thundering Weather: Dark clouds are approaching.
 - High Winds: High winds causing large trees to sway or leaves to be torn off trees (typically, winds in excess of 25 mph / 40 kph).
 - Smoke, Fire or Explosion.
 - Heavy Precipitation: Heavy rain, hail, sleet, snow or ice begins falling or accumulating on the tent(s) (e.g., can falling so hard that it runs off the tent walls to ground, snow piling up on the top(s) of the tent(s), etc.).
 - Flooding: Water running through the tent or surrounding area.
 - Gas Leak.
 - Anchooring Failure: Any of the anchoring devices (ally) or the Rented Item(s), any pole(s) or wall(s) begins to move, tilt or bend.

IF A DECISION IS MADE TO EVACUATE YOU MUST:

(A) **Make a Public Announcement:** Announce immediately that there is a weather or other emergency and that it is unsafe to stay in or under any Temporary Structure.

(B) **Request all occupants to evacuate immediately and take shelter in the location(s) you've chosen as emergency shelter(s).**

(C) **Render Assistance:** Assist your guests along the evacuation route to the emergency shelter.

(D) **IF AN EVACUATION, even if the Rented Item(s) appears to be intact, it may not be safe to return to. For example, one or more stakes may have been pulled out of the ground or there may be loose poles, ropes or straps. Contact ACOR, so we can inspect each structure BEFORE you permit anyone to reenter and/or resume your event.**

Contractor's Details:

Copyright © EquipmentRentalConcepts.com. All Rights Reserved. 1 This form is provided by www.alloccasions.com. Lessee should create its own unique evacuation plan to suit its specific needs.

4

The ceremony and reception at Possum Hollow Farm were held in two separate areas of the farm, about a half mile apart. The only structures on the property were a tractor barn and a small farmhouse. The install went pretty smoothly – we only needed the tractor twice to pull the caterer and the wine vendor out of the mud!



5

For this event, we had an almost ideal situation: about a week for install, excellent site access, no utilities or obstacles, and a 500-acre farm all to ourselves.

We provided and installed the following items:

- 25Mx35M Losberger reception structure with dura trac flooring, carpet, and interior draping
- 9Mx15M Losberger restroom structure with interior division for a nursing station for new moms
- 9Mx12M with 6Mx6M dormer Losberger entry tent
- 20x60 and 20x20 Anchor Fiesta frame catering tents
- 57x96 Fred's Stillwater ceremony tent with dura trac flooring and carpet
- Chandeliers, bars, tables, chairs, soft seating, heaters, dumpster, restroom trailer, stage, dancefloor, and ceremony seating

6

We had a rough run that fall with the weather in September and this was the last big wedding of the year. The weather that week had been cooperative: cool mornings, mild afternoons, and only a little rain. The forecast looked decent for the big day. Although there was a front moving across the Midwest, it looked like the worst of it would miss us. I went to bed Friday night feeling satisfied with what we had accomplished and looking forward to spending Saturday afternoon with my family after finishing up the ceremony install in the morning.



7

At 6AM Saturday, I had a rude awakening. The front had taken a turn – it was headed straight toward us and was on track to arrive just before the start of the ceremony. The 60mph wind gusts were causing a lot of damage as it made its way toward us.

I reached out to the planner around 7am to start the difficult conversation. My recommendation was to try to reschedule the event to Sunday if the band and caterer were available. Thankfully, she is a real pro, and handled everything calmly and efficiently. The band and caterer were able to accommodate the change to Sunday, so all that was left was to present this option to the family.

The planner and I got on a call around 9:30am with the parents of the bride to discuss the situation. I explained the options, letting them know there was a real possibility we would need to evacuate or not use the tents at all. After the initial shock (and a few tears) they were very understanding but wanted to think it over.

They called back around 11am and explained that out of consideration for the out-of-town guests who would need to rearrange travel plans, they would prefer to move forward with the Saturday event if we could devise a workable contingency plan.

8



The planner, the caterer and I started to work on Plan B. The farm staff cleared one of the tractor barns in case it was needed for the ceremony or cocktail area. I called in one of our crew leaders to help me manage the situation. The site was lower than the surrounding areas and the main tent had tree cover on three sides, but we used handheld wind meters to monitor the the situation.

9

Pat from Losberger was available by phone to talk through what was and was not reasonable in this situation. We concluded that the structures would be fine given the forecast, but the chandeliers and hanging floral installation could be an issue. It was decided that we would use the main tent as long as the wind gusts stayed under 35mph. I would stay outside using the wind meter to monitor and our crew leader would be inside the tent ready to clear the areas with the chandeliers and florals.



10

It got progressively windier as the afternoon wore on, and although it looked like the front was weakening as it approached, it was still a big storm that was going to last for several hours. By the time the guests began to arrive, the highest wind we'd seen was 25mph, so we made the decision to hold the ceremony in the tent. We were prepared to evacuate if needed and move the guests to the barn, but the plan was to use teams of horses with buggies, so this would be a slow process if we had to make that call.



11

We continued to monitor the wind, and the highest it reached during the ceremony was 28mph. Other than the wind noise making it hard for guests to hear, the ceremony went off smoothly. The wind picked up a little while the guests were having cocktails in the barn, blowing over and breaking the glass tube heaters near the ceremony area despite them being nailed into the ground.



After cocktail hour, we moved the guests to the reception tent. The wind never exceeded 30 mph, although we did clear the bar and dance floor areas 3 times throughout the evening. It finally began to subside around 9 pm, just in time for the band to start playing.

12

As you can imagine, this was one of the most difficult and stressful days of my career so far. As I headed home, truly exhausted, I was grateful that the client had the event they wanted, and everyone would go home safely. We had worked for this family a dozen times over the years and they are kind and grateful. If I had to go through hell, I was thankful it was with them and this team of vendors.



“

IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE FOR ALL THE MANY THINGS YOU AND YOUR ALL OCCASIONS TEAM ACCOMPLISHED FOR OUR FAMILY AND ALEXA AND JACK'S WEDDING WEEKEND. WE MADE A GOOD PLAN FROM THE GET-GO AND THE DECISION TO WORK WITH AO WAS SURELY THE WISEST DECISION WE MADE. THE WEDDING WAS FULL OF MANY CHALLENGES - ALL OF WHICH YOU MANAGED TO FIGURE OUT A LOGICAL SOLUTION FOR SO THEIR DREAM OF 'DANCING IN THE SOYBEANS UNDER THE STARS' COULD COME TO FRUITION.

THOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND EVERYONE'S CONTROL CAME STORMING AT US WHEN LEAST EXPECTED, YOU STILL MANAGED TO OVERSEE THE SITUATION WITH PATIENCE, PRUDENCE AND PERSEVERANCE.

WE ARE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL TO YOU, YOUR TEAM AND THE GOD OF WIND WHO ALL RALLIED TOGETHER SO THAT THE 'SHOW COULD GO ON'...THANK YOU - SEEMS INSIGNIFICANT BUT MEAN IT SO SINCERELY!

Debbie O.
Mother of the Groom

13

QUESTIONS?

Thank you to our session sponsor:



14