

The University of Alabama

Requirements for Theme Party Construction Projects & Use of Inflatables/Amusement Devices

This policy was developed to assist student organizations (“organization”) constructing temporary structures for theme parties, or any other gathering, to properly design and build the structure for the safety of those attending the party. This policy also applies to the use of inflatables and other amusement devices. In addition, the policy requires an emphasis on safety during the construction and tear-down to avoid injuries amongst those involved. This policy is in addition to all other policies, guidelines, registration procedures and inspection requirements applicable to special and/or social events.

Theme Party Structure Definition – A Theme Party Structure is erected for a party with a specific theme and can include stages, boardwalks, tiki huts, viewing platforms, decks, bars tables, etc. This does not include lawn/house decorations or signs/banners to promote events, but does include any structure, for any gathering, that includes non-member guests.

Inflatable/Amusement Device Definition – An inflatable/amusement device is largely for the entertainment of the participants and may require physical strength, agility and coordination. These can include, but are not limited to water slides/slip-n-slide, bungee run, Velcro wall, gladiator arena, dunk tank, mechanical bulls, bungee trampoline, and rock climbing walls.

Planning, Design & Approval – To provide ample time to review plans and determine what training and/or guidance may be needed the organization must submit a plan to Greek Affairs (Dean of Students for other student organizations) for the theme party structure *at least 7 days in advance of the proposed construction start date*. The plan shall include a diagram with general dimensions and the type and size of materials that will be used to build the structure and include details for connections, guardrails, and handrails. The plan shall show the location of each structure on the organization’s property and how the structure will be anchored, or secured.

This advance notice allows ample time for the Dean of Students, Greek Affairs, Environmental Health & Safety, Risk Management and Construction Administration to evaluate the request and provide guidance, training and confirmation the structure is suitable for the intended use.

Approval to construct the structure does not mean that changes will not be requested by the University during the construction process. Additional work may be required to address construction integrity, materials, workmanship, etc.

One critical element in the design and construction of a temporary structure is the estimated capacity. Unless the organization can confirm reliable controls are established, the design and construction review will be based on the assumption the structure is loaded to a maximum capacity (approximately 200+/-lbs. per sq. ft.).

Guardrails must be designed to support 50 pounds per foot and a single concentrated load of 200 pounds applied at any point along the top rail.

Before digging and/or excavating, a call should be made to Alabama One-Call (811 or 1-800-292-8525) and University Facilities Administration (348-6001) to determine if there are any underground utilities in the area where the digging/excavating is planned. Any underground utilities will be marked and any excavation and/or digging shall be at least 18” from the marks indicating the location of underground utilities. While 18” is the minimal distance, in certain circumstances, the party locating the utilities may recommend additional distance or other reasonable precautions (e.g. hand digging, non-destructive water jet, etc.) due to the uncertainty of the exact location of underground utilities.

If applicable, the organization shall obtain building permits and/or other applicable permits to the appropriate city, county or state agency with jurisdiction. The University will not provide guidance or direction on license/permit requirements.

If the organization elects to engage a contractor to erect the structure, the contractor performing the work will be required to meet with a member of the University’s Construction Administration unit to review the proposed work and all proposed work is subject to acceptance by the University.

Responsible Individuals – At least two individuals that are members of the organization accept responsibility for managing the structure construction project and will serve as the contacts for University officials involved in reviewing the project plans and monitoring the construction process. One of the responsible individuals shall be present at all time while construction is in progress.

Training – The members designated to be responsible for the project must attend an orientation and training session to better understand proper design and construction techniques for structures, the safe use of power tools and other elements essential to the project. The University’s Construction Administration or Risk Management unit will be responsible for the orientation and training session.

Structure Limitations & Restrictions – The University will review each plan and assist the organization in establishing construction specifications and practices to minimize risk during the construction phase and while the structure is in use. However, the following restrictions will apply in every case:

- Any elevated structure (e.g., viewing platform, deck, stage, boardwalk, etc.) intended for attendees to stand or sit shall not have a floor greater than 42 inches off the ground at the highest point. It should be noted any structure 30 inches or taller (up to the 42 inch maximum) must have a substantial handrail 42 inches above the floor level with a mid-rail. Depending on the use, the requirements for structures below 30 inches in height to the floor level will typically be less stringent than structures 30 inches or greater.
- The maximum height of any structure is 12 feet.
- Particle board or oriented-strand board (OSB) may be used as a flooring material if reasonable steps are taken to protect the particle board or OSB from moisture damage from rain or other sources. Using particle board or OSB may require additional floor joist support as compared to plywood or decking lumber. Used particle board or OSB may not be used unless it has been inspected and deemed reasonably sound by either Construction Administration or Risk Management
- The use of bamboo is discouraged. If bamboo is necessary to fit the theme of the event, the organization is required to purchase commercially grown and harvested bamboo.

- Elevated structures shall incorporate guarding or protection to prevent anyone from going underneath.
- The structure may not have a tower, slide, rope-bridge or swing. Remember – as mentioned in the Party Smart Social Event Planning Guidelines, **no pools are allowed**.
- No torches or open flames are allowed within 10 feet of any structure or any flammable or combustible materials.
- If palm or palmetto leaves are used as a decorative material, the leaves must be “green” and have an adequate moisture content to prevent the leaves from burning when exposed to an open flame.
- If any lighting or electrical outlets are added to a structure, the work must be done by a licensed electrician and confirmed by receipt.
- All temporary exterior electrical lines, outlets, etc. must be GFI protected
- The use of used materials is highly discouraged.

Construction & Teardown Schedule – Adherence to the following schedule is required without exception:

- The work on the structure may not begin until noon on the Sunday before the event unless an exception is granted or restriction applied.
- The structure must be completed for final inspection no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day **before** the event is scheduled.
- The structure shall be removed and all materials are to be off the University’s or organization’s property by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday following a weekend event or no more than 48 hours after a weekday event.
- Inflatables and other amusement devices must be removed no later than 12:00 p.m. the following day.
- The teardown schedule is for the theme party structure only and does not change the requirement(s) outlined in other programs/policies regarding trash and debris clean up and removal.

Inspections – Inspections for theme parties with structures will involve two separate observations:

- 1) As with any social event, the fraternity or sorority house will be inspected by a member of the University’s Office of Environmental Health & Safety to determine if the life safety elements (e.g., alarm systems, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, smoke/fire detectors, paths of egress, etc.) and general condition of the house are appropriate for a social event. This general life-safety inspection will typically be conducted 2-4 days prior to the scheduled party. This inspection will not include the review of the structure unless the structure restricts emergency exit routes or creates other life-safety concerns.
- 2) Observations of structures will be made by a member of the Construction Administration and/or Risk Management staff and the schedule will be determined based on the plans submitted and estimated schedule for completion. The observation may include brief daily observations to provide guidance on the work to be completed and to correct any work that may be contrary to proper design/construction. A final inspection will take place no later than 5:00 p.m. the day before the party and the structure is to be fully complete at the time of the final inspection. No structural alterations are allowed after the final inspection and the University may

elect to perform a confirmation observation the day of the event. If the structure is used for more than one event, the University may elect to check the integrity of the structure between each event.

Inflatables/Amusement Devices – Any organization desiring to use an inflatable or amusement device shall seek approval from the Dean of Students, Director of Greek Affairs or other University Official with the authority to consider such requests. Each request will be evaluated based on the potential risks, enjoyment by our students and their invited guests, and willingness to comply with the various elements of this policy. The requesting organization and others that may be involved with the event must adhere to the following minimum requirements:

- 1) The hosting organization must provide evidence of liability insurance and confirmation the activity is covered by commercial general liability (CGL) insurance policy(s) and the CGL policy extends to all participants. In addition to the University's insurance requirements for Greek organizations, which typically specify minimum limits of \$1mil per occurrence/\$2mil general aggregate, the organization must have an additional \$4mil in excess CGL or umbrella coverage.
- 2) If the organization is affiliated with a national organization, an authorized officer or director of the national organization/entity must approve the event and confirm the use of an inflatable or amusement device does not conflict with existing risk management programs or policies, and the organization's CGL and excess/umbrella insurance program extends to the activity, including participants without any limitations or restrictions.
- 3) The vendor providing the inflatable/amusement device must provide proof of general liability insurance in accordance with the University's insurance requirements and also include the University and hosting organization as an additional insured. The vendor's liability insurance must extend to participants without restrictions or coverage limitations.
- 4) Each person using the inflatable or amusement device must sign a waiver/release as confirmation he or she accepts the risk of injury or damage and agrees the University and host organization are not responsible for injury or damage. The language on the waiver/release shall include protection for both the University and hosting organization and is subject to review and approval by the Office of Counsel or Office of Risk Management.
- 5) The inflatable/amusement device will be subject to inspection and approval prior to use by the University's Office of Risk Management and Office of Environmental Health and Safety. In certain situations as determined by the University's Office of Risk Management and Office of Environmental Health and Safety, the vendor providing the inflatable or amusement device must be present while the equipment is in use and a qualified operator must be provided.
- 6) The inflatable/amusement device must be used as designed and intended and the organization must provide at least three (3) sober and responsible members to control behavior and correct participants that may be using the inflatable/amusement device in a manner that is contrary to the design of the device or places the participant or other attendees at a greater risk of injury or possible death.
- 7) If applicable, the organization must file for a Grounds Use Permit and approval must be granted prior to the commencement of any work.
- 8) Any expense resulting from damage to University grounds or other University property will be the financial responsibility of the hosting organization.
- 9) Should the wind or other weather conditions become threatening, the inflatable/amusement device activity shall be halted immediately and all inflated devices shall be deflated. The

organization shall determine the maximum wind speed based on the recommendation of the manufacturer or vendor.

Permanent Structures - Under certain circumstances, the University may entertain the possibility of a permanent structure such as a stage, boardwalk, viewing platform, or deck at a fraternity or sorority house where the organization has exclusive use of the property. The design of a permanent structure must adhere to the University's design guidelines and be constructed of materials that are suited for exterior use. In most cases, the proposed structure may not be visible from the street or walkways and may not limit or restrict access to the house, block exits or cause any inconvenience for residents or invited guests. Any request for consideration of a permanent structure should be coordinated with Greek Affairs.

Costs & Expenses – The organization shall assume all of the expenses for design services, materials, contract labor, building permits, materials disposal or any other costs or expenses related to the design, construction and removal of a temporary theme party structure. The University will provide the necessary resources to review the structure plans, provide training/orientation and inspections of the structure in the course of construction until completion. However, if the organization does not comply with a request from a University official, causes a delay in the review/inspection process or does not built the temporary structure as directed, the University may assess a charge for the time spent on the project at a rate to cover the time and expenses incurred. In addition to incurring a charge for being non-compliant, the organization may be subject to other disciplinary action as determined by the Dean of Students and/or Greek Affairs

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