



Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Department
of Commerce

Division of State Fire Marshal
Sheryl Maxfield, Director



Technical Bulletin 20-001
February 2020

Fire Safety at Agritourism Facilities (Revised)

It has become very popular to host wedding events and other meetings or gatherings in rustic settings. Many agricultural properties are converting old barns into event centers – or building new barns for this purpose. Because of the nature of these facilities, however, fire hazards often exist that may not be present at other such venues. These include:

- Highly flammable/combustible materials, such as exposed timbers, hay and straw
- Storage of chemicals and flammable liquids
- Minimal exits
- Candles
- Flammable drapery and fabrics
- Pyrotechnics / fireworks / flame effects
- Unapproved cooking devices

Therefore, even though these settings create beautiful backdrops for events, the importance of proper fire safety in such buildings cannot be overstated. It is a common misconception that the Ohio Fire Code does not apply to such facilities. This is not true. Although agricultural facilities may be exempt from the Ohio Building Code in certain circumstances, **such facilities are not exempt from the Ohio Fire Code.**

To ensure the safety of the public who will be attending events at agritourism facilities, basic fire safety precautions must be taken when these facilities are converted or constructed. Required fire safety features will depend on the exact building specifications and building layout. However, the following should be considered when event buildings (which often fall into an A-2 occupancy classification) are being designed and/or converted:

- A fire *alarm* system is required in A-2 occupancies with an occupant load of 300 or more
- A fire *suppression* system is required in any A-2 occupancy that is over 5,000 sq. ft. or that has an occupant load of 100 or more
- Any required fire suppression system will have to cover the entire floor where the A-2 occupancy is located
- A-2 occupancies may require fire rated separation from other occupancies in the same structure
- If occupant loads in the facility will exceed 50 people, exit doors must swing outward or in the direction of egress travel
- Portable fire extinguishers must be present
- Exits, exit signage and exit lighting must be provided and must be sufficient for the specific facility
- Fire apparatus access roads must be available and maintained
- If commercial cooking equipment is used or if grease laden vapors are going to be produced, the cooking equipment may require a hood suppression system
- If a carbon dioxide (CO₂) system is used (with more than 100 pounds of CO₂) a detection system must be provided in areas where CO₂ can accumulate

Fire safety inspectors are encouraged to get involved early in the plan development and review stages of any of these facilities that are being built in their area. This will allow all fire safety requirements to be addressed at the planning stages rather than after construction or conversion.

It is the mission of the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to ensure that public accommodations are as safe as possible for all members of the public who frequent them, as well for workers at such establishments and for the owners of these beautiful and vibrant facilities. Therefore, if the SFM can provide plan review or other assistance regarding the application of the Ohio Fire Code to a particular agritourism facility, please contact us:

Division of State Fire Marshal
8895 E. Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
Code Enforcement Bureau
Phone: 1-614-728-5460
Toll free: 1-888-276-0303
Sfm_codeenf@com.state.oh.us