

Tent protection

By Wayne Walley



Photo courtesy Aztec Tents

Organized storage saves time and money

Storing a tent sounds easy, doesn't it? Fold it or roll it and put it on a shelf until you need it again. Have all the hardware nearby so that everything can be packed nice and neat on the truck when it's time to send a tent out with an installation crew.

Then again, most rental stores that offer tents for rent probably have a variety of tent sizes from small canopies to those that are 40 ft. wide or larger, possibly in different colors or styles, including frame tents, pole tents, clearspans and structures. In addition, it's likely that the company will rent out many tents at the same time.

This is where organizational skills, logistics and more come into play for those who have success renting tents. Some have learned over the years what works best for them and most manufacturers have tips and advice they were willing to share as part of this article.

A first step is training employees, so that they know what to do and where everything goes. Melani Kodikian, CERP, president, A to Z Party Rental, Montgomeryville, Pa., says rental stores should consider going a step further by cross-training party, warehouse and tent crews.

"Many times during the season the tent crew has little time to properly unload trucks before they have to be back

out the door, so the warehouse and party staff are able to assist with returning tent equipment to the proper storage areas instead of letting it all build at the loading docks," Kodikian says.

"They also are trained to pull tent parts to have them staged, ready and waiting for the tent crew to load. Keeping the warehouse organized is just as important as discarding or repurposing old parts and vinyl. Not only do those items occupy vital real estate, they create clutter and obstacles for staff to find what they really need," she says.

"We all tend to keep items much longer than needed because we never know when an item might be useful, but the time comes to clean out the shelves and reduce the clutter," she says.

Celebrations! Party Rentals and Tents, Roseville, Calif., also makes sure the warehouse staff is cross-trained in different departments, not only to increase everyone's overall knowledge of the business, but to be able to create a larger team ready to help on projects with a large amount of products and short turnaround time.

At A to Z Party Rental, frame tents are bundled with shrink wrap instead of straps. Kodikian says the shift allows for a tighter wrap on the tents and reduces space on

**Why
didn't I think
of that?**

the shelf needed for buckles offsetting frames.

"In addition, we bundle our crowns with the hip poles and have a separate bundle for the expandable sections. These bundles not only reduce time pulling parts in the warehouse, they reduce assembly time on the installations. All of our frame work is color-coded by spray painting the inside of the tube. The crew can easily distinguish a hip pole from a perimeter or ridge pole when it is sitting on the shelf of the warehouse or shelf in the truck," she says.

Rob Robben, CERP, owner, Event Fence Construction, Berthoud, Colo., agrees that using a color coding system for storing poles and hardware is a must.

"In addition, you can store them on pallets to load right onto the truck," Robben says.

Celebrations! Party Rentals and Tents also has made wraps for its structure tops that are large enough to double as drop cloths for each section of canvas. Different colors of canvas are used for different sizes. When unfolded on the job site, the top

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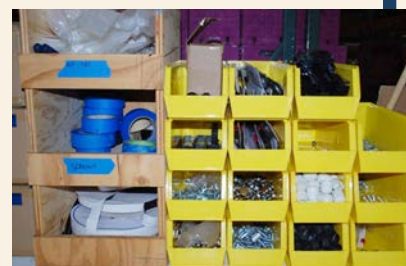


Photo courtesy Celebrations! Party Rentals and Tents

Celebrations! Party Rentals and Tents, Roseville, Calif.

"Some of the products we carry require small parts to assemble and they often get lost. We created a 'parts station' next to our loading docks,

so our loaders and drivers can access these parts quickly," says Lacey Wright, manager, Celebrations! Party Rentals and Tents. ♦



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Photo courtesy Losberger US



always is protected from the ground as it is installed. When the event is over, the canvas goes right back onto the wrap and is folded up to transport home.

Kenny Puff, owner, Party Line Tent Rentals, Elmsford, N.Y., says he realized long ago that the party rental business actually is a material handling business.

"Whatever we can put on dollies that we can wheel, we do that. We want to eliminate hand holding as much as possible. In the

warehouse, if something has to be carried, then it is stored closer to the door. If it's on wheels, then it can go further back," he says.

"We want to keep the floor clear and open, and we want to keep it simple. You have to understand that the more an item is touched or carried, the more it will cost you. Fewer touches means you are more profitable. Then there is the safety factor. The less you lift or carry, the fewer opportunities for injury," Puff says.

JoRonCo, Bakersfield, Calif.

At JoRonCo, Bakersfield, Calif., the company has built clearly labeled storage racks for all 2-in. tent pipe. The company also tags its tent tops with a small dog tag that has the tent size engraved on it. Every size is a different color tag and the tags are connected to the top by a 1/8-in. cable. In addition, the company takes extra tops and sidewalls to larger jobs.



"The problem was when the trucks returned, the warehouse did not know if the tops or sidewalls had been used or not," says Ron Holbert, owner, JoRonCo. "We started using different color twine for clean and dirty tops. Orange is clean. White is dirty. We use white as dirty because the crews always were using twine on the site to tie items off and the orange just looked bad, so all of our trucks carry white twine." ♦



**Why
didn't I think
of that?**

St. George Events & Occasions, Washington, Utah

For tents with center poles suspended by cross cables, the company uses a few pool noodles and cuts through one side just to the middle to slide them onto the cables when it is time to take down the tent.

"These protect the canopy from pesky pin holes or abrasive wear that comes from contact between the cables and the tent fabric," says Jeffrey Hall, owner, St. George Events & Occasions. ♦



In addition, Jenny Cole, sales and marketing manager, Charnecke Tents/CCC Washers, Rosholt, Wis., says rental stores should make sure every pipe size has its own, clearly labeled bin and that each tent size has its own crates with the joints pieces that also are clearly marked with the size.

"For tent materials, each tent bundle is organized by size in the warehouse and ends are stored separate from mids. Ends have a bright color patch with the size written on the patch and each area is clearly marked," Cole says.

"Also, to store tents, you want to make sure the tent sections are dry and clean. Then store them in bags. We also have our tent sections on shelving so that they are not stacked on cement. If you leave tent sections stored on cement, over time they actually will wick away moisture from the cement, which could cause mold and mildew on the tents," she says.

Sometimes, the materials, like wire cage crates used to ship tents from manufacturers, can be adapted to a rental store's warehouse for organization.

Losberger US, Frederick, Md., for example, uses wire cage crates with drop-down sides for access to ship and warehouse smaller, but heavy tent hardware like roof cables and base plates.

"Like parts for each tent system are stored and transported in the same wire crates, which are close to indestructible and are good for stacking," says David MacArthur, Losberger US national sales manager.

Losberger also uses heavy-duty PVC crates to store nuts, bolts, spindle tensioners, connectors and brackets while long rafters and beams are stacked, blocked with wood shims or dunnage and then bound together for storage and transport.

"We warehouse the bundles of beams, legs and other long parts like purlins and tension rails the same way as when we ship to job locations. At dismantling, the bundles should be redone so they can be loaded onto the truck and eventually warehoused at the | To Page 14



The Clearspan Rental Solution

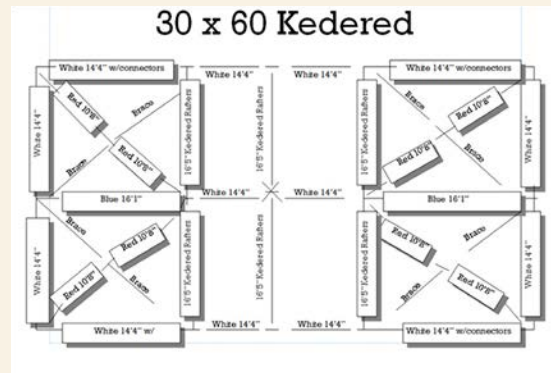
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Busylad Rent-All, Tupelo, Miss.

The company has created labeled diagrams showing what poles and tops go with each tent so that the tents are pulled according to the diagram. ♦



company's location," MacArthur says.

"Large aluminum and galvanized steel framing parts are warehoused in an open, secure yard. You can maximize cubic footage and protect the aluminum against damage in transport with wood blocking and careful stacking and binding," he says.

Tiffany Hughes, sales and marketing manager, TopTec Events Tents, Moore, S.C., suggests that poles be stored horizontally and parallel to the dock in a rental store's warehouse to make loading and unloading of trucks a bit easier.

"Modular/folding wire or plastic totes with fork pockets work well for bracket storage. Also, leave legs and bases assembled to speed time on the job site by not having to make those connections on site," Hughes says.

She also suggests that vinyl be stored clean and dry in cloth bags to avoid the

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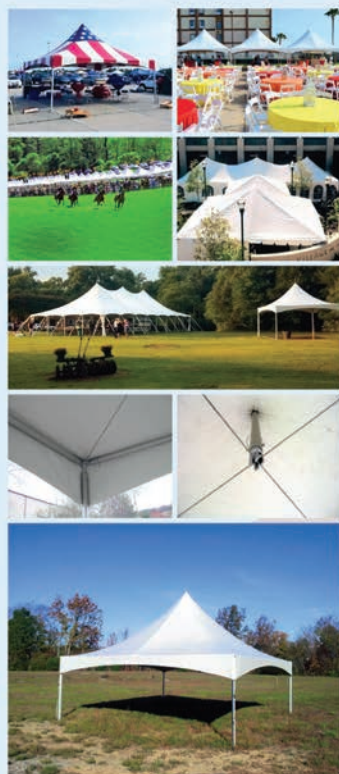
chance of condensation and mildew on folded or rolled pieces.

“Tops and walls should be stored by style, then size, to facilitate accurate loading of trucks for jobs. ID tags attached to the tops and not just the bags are helpful in making sure the tops are identified. The ID tags can be left hanging out of the bags, so the warehouse staff knows just what is going on the truck,” she says.

“Appropriate ventilation in the warehouse will further aid in keeping vinyl dry. Pallet racks with wire shelves for individual pieces, then pallets with slip sheets of plywood or cardboard for multiples of the same size or style can be used. Be sure all pallets are free of nails protruding above the surface to keep them from snagging on bags or vinyl,” Hughes says. ♦



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