

Canopy Safety 101: Your Guide to Canopy Safety at the Keller Farmers Market

Most accidents at farmers markets involve wind-blown tents, canopies and umbrellas. Canopies are used at the market to shield vendors and their product from sun and rain, but unpredictable winds can come up at any moment, creating a safety hazard if the canopy is not properly secured.

We require all vendors to minimize the risk caused by canopies by following rules for canopy safety.

Canopy weights must be attached to vendor canopies at all times. Vendors shall agree to the following policy as stated in the Keller Farmers Market Rules & Regulations regarding canopy use. There are insurance implications for failing to enforce this.

“All canopies, including umbrellas, on-site at KFM during normal market hours, including during setup and breakdown, are required to be sufficiently and safely weighted to the ground. Each leg must be anchored with no less than 24 pounds. Any vendor who fails to properly weight his or her canopy may not be allowed to sell at KFM that market day, unless that vendor chooses to take down and stow their canopy and sell without it.”

In certain inclement weather conditions, even properly secured canopies can be precarious. If canopies need to be taken down in the middle of market due to inclement weather, vendors should direct customers to move out of the way so they are not injured.

Weights should be secured in a manner that does not create its own safety hazard

- Weights should not cause a tripping hazard.
- Weights should be tethered with lines that are clearly visible.
- Weights should be securely attached.
- Weights should be on the ground, NOT above peoples' heads.

Sufficiently weighted canopies will have at least 24 pounds per leg. One canopy manufacturer recommends at least 40 pounds on each corner of a 10x10 tent, double that on a 10x20 tent; 50 pounds should be used for umbrellas. Weights for signs will vary depending on the size of sign.

Always be prepared

You should always have your canopy secured to the ground. It is not enough to have the tools necessary to secure your canopy on hand if you do not employ them. Strong gusts can come up without warning anywhere, at any time. After your canopy takes flight and causes damage, it is too late to decide to secure your canopy. You should assume winds will come; indeed, they often do.

Examples of good canopy weights

- Filling an empty bucket (2.5 gallon works great) with sand/cement/water and tying this to each corner of the tent with a rope or bungee. It is NOT sufficient to place the bucket on the feet of the canopy.
- Filling buckets/containers with sand/cement/water that can be anchored or secured with a rope or bungee; these include canvas bags or plastic buckets/containers that have a handle through which a rope or bungee can be secured.
- Sandbag weights that are specially made for securing canopies and weigh at least 24 pounds. These sandbag weights are vertical and can be strapped to the legs of the canopy.

- PVC pipe capped and filled with cement can be hung on the inside of canopy poles as long as it is secured so that it does not collide with customers.
- The best weights are strapped to the bottom of each leg, and then tethered via a bungee to the top corner of the canopy, thus lowering the center of gravity of the canopy. In a strong gust of wind, even canopies secured with enough weight can be broken if the weights are not suspended from the top corners of the canopy.

Examples of Bad Canopy Weights

- Gallon water jugs are not heavy enough for large gusts of wind. One gallon of water weighs 8 pounds. One gallon of water on each corner would be the equivalent of a 3 year old child trying to hold down a 100 square foot parachute.
- Tying tents, canopies or umbrellas to tables, or coolers provides tripping hazards and frequently does not provide adequate weight. Vendor safety is just as important as customer safety.
- Sandbags that cannot be placed upright and securely tied to the tent or canopy should not be used.
- Keep in mind that cement blocks are hard, easy to trip over, and are very effective toe and shin breakers.
- At all costs, avoid stretched out cords and lines. Customers and their children will get them wrapped around their arms or legs, causing them to trip and fall, and perhaps pull over your display in the process.