SECTION 3102
MEMBRANE STRUCTURES

3102.1 General.

The provisions of Sections 3102.1 through 3102.8 shall apply to *air-supported*, *air-inflated*, *membrane-covered cable*, *membrane-covered frame* and tensile *membrane structures*, collectively known as *membrane structures*, erected for a period of 180 days or longer. Those erected for a shorter period of time shall comply with the *International Fire Code*. Membrane structures covering water storage facilities, water clarifiers, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, *greenhouses* and similar facilities not used for human occupancy are required to meet only the requirements of Sections 3102.3.1 and 3102.7. Membrane structures erected on a building, balcony, deck or other structure for any period of time shall comply with this section.

3102.2 Tensile membrane structures and air-supported structures.

Tensile membrane structures and *air-supported structures*, including permanent and temporary structures, shall be designed and constructed in accordance with ASCE 55. The provisions in Sections 3102.3 through 3102.6 shall apply.

3102.3 Type of construction.

Noncombustible membrane structures shall be classified as Type IIB construction. Noncombustible frame or cable-supported structures covered by an *approved* membrane in accordance with Section 3102.3.1 shall be classified as Type IIB construction. Heavy timber frame-supported structures covered by an *approved* membrane in accordance with Section 3102.3.1 shall be classified as Type IV-HT construction. Other membrane structures shall be classified as Type V construction.

> **Exception:** Plastic less than 30 feet (9144 mm) above any floor used in *greenhouses*, where occupancy by the general public is not authorized, and for aquaculture pond covers is not required to meet the fire propagation performance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701.

3102.3.1 Membrane and interior liner material.

Membranes and interior liners shall be either noncombustible as set forth in Section 703.3 or meet the fire propagation performance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701 and the manufacturer's test protocol.

> **Exception:** Plastic less than 20 mil (0.5 mm) in thickness used in *greenhouses*, where occupancy by the general public is not authorized, and for aquaculture pond covers is not required to meet the fire propagation performance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701.

3102.4 Allowable floor areas.

The area of a membrane structure shall not exceed the limitations specified in Section 506.

3102.5 Maximum height.

Membrane structures shall not exceed one *story* nor shall such structures exceed the height limitations in feet specified in Section 504.3.

> **Exception:** *Noncombustible membrane structures* serving as roofs only.

3102.6 Mixed construction.

Membrane structures shall be permitted to be utilized as specified in this section as a portion of buildings of other types of construction. Height and area limits shall be as specified for the type of construction and occupancy of the building.

3102.6.1 Noncombustible membrane.

A noncombustible membrane shall be permitted for use as the roof or as a skylight of any building or *atrium* of a building of any type of construction provided that the membrane is not less than 20 feet (6096 mm) above any floor, balcony or gallery.

3102.6.1.1 Membrane.

A membrane meeting the fire propagation performance criteria of Test Method 1 or Test Method 2, as appropriate, of NFPA 701 shall be permitted to be used as the roof or as a skylight on buildings of Type IIB, III, IV-HT and V construction, provided that the membrane is not less than 20 feet (6096 mm) above any floor, balcony or gallery.

3102.7 Engineering design.

The structure shall be designed and constructed to sustain *dead loads*; *loads* due to tension or inflation; *live loads* including wind, snow or *flood* and seismic loads and in accordance with Chapter 16.

3102.7.1 Lateral restraint.

For *membrane-covered frame structures*, the membrane shall not be considered to provide lateral restraint in the calculation of the capacities of the frame members.

3102.8 Inflation systems.

Air-supported and *air-inflated structures* shall be provided with primary and auxiliary inflation systems to meet the minimum requirements of Sections 3102.8.1 through 3102.8.3.

3102.8.1 Equipment requirements.

The inflation system shall consist of one or more blowers and shall include provisions for automatic control to maintain the required inflation pressures. The system shall be so designed as to prevent overpressurization of the system.

3102.8.1.1 Auxiliary inflation system.

In addition to the primary inflation system, in buildings larger than 1,500 square feet (140 m^2) in area, an auxiliary inflation system shall be provided with sufficient capacity to maintain the inflation of the structure in case of primary system failure. The auxiliary inflation system shall operate automatically when there is a loss of internal pressure and when the primary blower system becomes inoperative.

3102.8.1.2 Blower equipment.

Blower equipment shall meet all of the following requirements:

1. Blowers shall be powered by continuous-rated motors at the maximum power required for any flow condition as required by the structural design.
2. Blowers shall be provided with inlet screens, belt guards and other protective devices as required by the *building official* to provide protection from injury.
3. Blowers shall be housed within a weather protecting structure.
4. Blowers shall be equipped with backdraft check dampers to minimize air loss when inoperative.
5. Blower inlets shall be located to provide protection from air contamination. The location of inlets shall be *approved*.

3102.8.2 Standby power.

Wherever an auxiliary inflation system is required, an *approved* standby power-generating system shall be provided. The system shall be equipped with a suitable means for automatically starting the generator set upon failure of the normal electrical service and for automatic transfer and operation of all of the required electrical functions at full power within 60 seconds of such service failure. Standby power shall be capable of operating independently for not less than 4 hours.

3102.8.3 Support provisions.

A system capable of supporting the membrane in the event of deflation shall be provided for in *air-supported* and *air-inflated structures* having an *occupant load* of 50 or more or where covering a *swimming pool* regardless of *occupant load*. The support system shall be capable of maintaining membrane structures used as a roof for Type I construction not less than 20 feet (6096 mm) above floor or seating areas. The support system shall be capable of maintaining other membranes not less than 7 feet (2134 mm) above the floor, seating area or surface of the water.