

Market Safety

Farmers' markets need to concern themselves with the safety of both their vendors and their customers. By taking a few simple steps the market can ensure it remains a great place to visit.

Tents, Umbrellas, Etc.

It is reported that the number one cause of injury at farmers' markets is toppling tents. A gusty wind coming from just the right direction will cause a tent to become a very heavy, damaging projectile. Any market vendor who has sold at an open-air market for any length of time can attest to this.

Because some traditional ways of securing a tent can add a tripping obstacle to the sales area, smart market vendors devise ways to secure tents and umbrellas without adding to the safety problem. Some suggested ways to secure tents include hanging water filled gallon jugs from each corner high in the tent, filling a PVC pipe with sand and hanging it from each corner and securing it to the bottom of the leg as well.

Anything placed lower than waist high can actually create another safety problem. The often-seen concrete block on each leg or a coffee can filled with cement and attached to the tent with bungee cords can pose a trip hazard if some strategy to alert customers to the trip hazard is not employed. Sand bags at each tent leg require the same strategy of drawing the customers' eye down to see the trip hazard.

Traffic

Markets try to locate themselves in high traffic areas for visibility to draw in the most customers. But anytime you mix pedestrians and vehicles, accidents can occur. Both customers and the passing motorists will be looking at the market offerings and not for each other. A little planning is required to make things safer.

The location of parking in relation to the market can raise several issues. Do the customers park across the street from the market and have to cross a busy street? Perhaps the market should contact local authorities to allow the placement of a sign in the roadway to alert motorists to pedestrian traffic in the area.

The market should post signs to direct the flow of traffic into and out of the parking area allowing for a clear line of sight for exit. These signs can advertise the market as well as serving to ease confusion.

Cars in the market shopping area are not a safe situation for either the vendors or the customers and it is very risky for families with small children. Designing the placement of booths, adding traffic barriers, and the like should be done to protect the walkability of the market shopping space.

Surfaces

Parking lots and the market area should be free of holes, short poles out of the line of sight of drivers, drop off areas and any other obstacle that may cause injury or damage. Any possible problem area should be cordoned off and clearly marked.

Vendors should be cautioned to avoid placing items on the ground around their booth. Empty boxes or containers should be stored in their vehicle and not thrown around the truck. Loose wires, twine, or ropes will present a trip hazard if not covered.

The market area should be kept clean and all produce/garbage picked up or swept away. A piece of cantaloupe or a broken jar of jelly can make a slippery surface out of an asphalt parking lot. Any dropped items should be cleaned up immediately and each market should have supplies on hand to clean these things up.

If dogs are allowed in the market, customers should be gently reminded to pick up after their dogs and a receptacle for them to use should be made available. Also, according to the state Public Health Code, with the exception of permitted guide dogs or assistance dogs, animals are not allowed in areas where the preparing, cooking or serving of food takes place. Related to this, all exposed food must be adequately protected from contamination by any animals. Livestock brought to the market by a farmer for display in conformance with the guidelines offered in Chapter 10 of this manual must be kept at least 20 feet away from any food booths.

Displays

All tables should be stable and setups outside your primary table should be sturdy and able to hold weight. All glass jars and containers should be displayed so that customers can pick up and replace a jar as they shop. The same thing applies to elaborate produce displays. The choice of one tomato should not cause the entire stack to collapse.

Be Prepared

If someone falls at your market and needs first aid are you prepared? A market may keep a first aid kit at the market to handle basic injuries. If market vendors are reluctant to provide first aid, the supplies can be given to the injured person and/or persons there with the injured person to use.

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