

## FAQ:

# What permits or licenses are required for an outdoor special event on private property?

### Background:

Uses and structures associated with special events are addressed in both local and State codes and are often subject to special provisions.

This FAQ serves to provide clarification around permitting and licensing requirements for outdoor special events conducted on private property that are enforced by the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I). Please refer to [www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li) for a complete listing of L&I permits, licenses, and associated requirements.

Additional resources for other types of events are available through the City's website:

- Events within a City park or recreation center: [Events in City Park, Field, or Rec Center](#)
- Events within the public right-of-way or on City property (other than City park): [Get a Special Event Permit](#)
- Events within or on a structure: [Get a Temporary Occupancy Permit for a Special Event](#)

You may also refer to [L&I's Pop-up Beer Garden FAQ](#) for specific information on temporary outdoor eating/drinking establishments and [Code Bulletin A-1501](#) for complete information on temporary uses and structures.

### Answer:

Multiple permits and licenses are required for your event as outlined in this FAQ.

The Department of Licenses and Inspections review times vary with license or permit type and range from 5 to 20 business days, with specific review times listed on each service page. It is strongly recommended that event organizers initiate the application process at least 30 days in advance of the planned start date. If a building permit is required, it is recommended that organizers allow additional time to make necessary adjustments raised during the review.

### Zoning Permits

A [Zoning Permit](#) is required for all uses and structures on a lot.

[The Philadelphia Zoning Code](#) does not provide exemptions for temporary uses or structures; however, the Department may grant approval through the issuance of a temporary tent or building permit. Such approvals are subject to the following conditions:

- The use is limited to 15 days in a calendar year. If multiple events are conducted throughout the year, the cumulative length may not exceed 15 days. The Department reserves the right to rescind approval of the temporary use if the use is found to present a negative impact on the community or is found to be a threat to public health or safety.
- The approval of the structure is limited to 15 days in a calendar year. If multiple events involving the erection of structures are conducted throughout the year, no single structure may be installed for more than 15 days. If it is determined that there is a cumulative impact on the surrounding community, a separate zoning permit may be required.
- In considering any approval of temporary use and structures without a zoning permit, the Department is authorized to request any additional information necessary to evaluate the proposal.

## STRUCTURES

TYPE OF STRUCTURE	TYPE OF PERMIT	REQUIREMENTS
<b>Tents (excluding Special Tents)</b>		
Tents less than 400 sq ft	None	No permit required. Installation must comply with Chapter 31 of the Philadelphia Fire Code.
Tents between 400 and 700 sq ft (open on all sides with 12' clearance from other tents/structures)		
Tents, All Others	Tent Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Tent Permit</a> service; Installer must have a <a href="#">Commercial Activity License</a>
<b>Special Tents</b>		
More than 1 story	Tent Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Tent Permit</a> service. Installer must have a <a href="#">Commercial Activity License</a> . Additionally, A PA professional engineer is required to seal drawings (identifying local loading conditions) and perform structural inspection.
More than 7,500 square feet		
More than 1000 occupants		
Installation on Roof, Balcony, or Deck	Building Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Building Permit</a> service. Structure must comply with Section 3102 of the Philadelphia Building Code. Installer must have a <a href="#">Philadelphia Contractor's license</a> .
<b>Rides and Amusements</b>		
All Rides and Amusements, including Air-Inflated or Supported Structures	Pa Dept of Agriculture Approval	Refer to <a href="#">Pa Dept of Agriculture website</a> .
Air Inflated or Supported Structures (Multiple)	Pa Dept of Agriculture Approval and Tent Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Tent Permit</a> service; Installer must have a <a href="#">Commercial Activity License</a> . Must make an appointment to file L&I permit applications through <a href="http://www.phila.gov/li">www.phila.gov/li</a> .
<b>Other Temporary Structures*</b>		
Structures not occupied by the general public	None	Installation must comply with Section 3103 of the Philadelphia Building Code.
Platforms Exceeding 18" and occupied by the general public	Building Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Building Permit</a> service. The structure must comply with Section 3103 of the Philadelphia Building Code. Installer must have a <a href="#">Philadelphia Contractor's license</a> .
Fixed or Stadium Seating		
Structure occupied by the general public		
Special Event Structure exceeding 400 sq ft, ( <i>A temporary special event structure is any temporary ground-</i>	Building Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Building Permit</a> service. Structure must comply with Section 3103 of the Philadelphia

<i>supported structure, platform, stage, scaffolding or rigging, canopy, or tower that supports audio or visual effects equipment.)</i>		Building Code and 3105 of the Philadelphia Fire Code. Installer must have a <a href="#">Philadelphia Contractor's license</a> .
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\* Any structure installed for more than 180 days requires a building permit for permanent construction and must comply with all provisions of the Philadelphia Building Code.

### MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, AND PLUMBING

TYPE OF WORK	TYPE OF PERMIT	REQUIREMENTS
Portable restroom facilities	Phila Dept of Public Health Portable Toilet Permit (if installed more than 4 days or include more than 15 units)	Refer to <a href="#">Portable Toilet Permit</a> service. Accessible toilets on an accessible route must be provided.
On-site plumbing connections	Plumbing Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Plumbing Permit</a> service. Installer must have a <a href="#">Philadelphia Master Plumber Contractor's license</a> .
On-site wiring, connections, and temporary generators	Electrical Permit	Review <a href="#">Get an Electrical Permit</a> service. Installer must have a <a href="#">Philadelphia Electrical Contractor's license</a> . Inspections must be performed by a <a href="#">Philadelphia Electrical Inspection Agency</a> .
On-site installation of connected HVAC equipment, including ductwork and kitchen hoods	Mechanical Permit	Review <a href="#">Get a Mechanical Permit</a> service. Installer must have a <a href="#">Philadelphia Contractor's license</a> .

### LICENSES

TYPE OF LICENSE	CONDITIONS	REQUIREMENTS
Commercial Activity License	Operator and all vendors require a Commercial Activity License.	Review <a href="#">Get a Commercial Activity License</a> service. Must have <a href="#">Philadelphia Tax Account Number</a> issued by the Phila Dept of Revenue to apply.
Food License <sub>1</sub>	Required to serve prepared or pre-packaged food and/or beverages.	Review <a href="#">Get a Food Establishment Retail, Non-Permanent Location License</a> service. Must have <a href="#">approval of the Phila Dept of Public Health</a> to apply.
Amusement	Required to hold an event that charges admission or asks for donations for amusement activities.	Review <a href="#">Get an Amusement License</a> service.

Fireworks Display	Required for an event that uses fireworks or pyrotechnic special effects.	Review <a href="#">Get a Fireworks Display Permit</a> service.
Public Parking Lot	Required to charge a fee for parking or storing of vehicles.	Review <a href="#">Get a Public Parking Garage or Lot License</a> service.
Small Games of Chances	Required for non-profit organizations holding games of chance.	Review <a href="#">Get a Small Games of Chance License</a> service.
Dumpster	Required to place a dumpster on private property or in the public street or sidewalk.	Review <a href="#">Get a Dumpster License</a> service.

1. In addition, a Liquor License issued by the [Pa Liquor Control Board](#) is required to serve alcoholic beverages.

## ADDITIONAL APPROVALS AND REQUIREMENTS

An Outdoor Assembly Event Permit for events with planned attendance exceeding 1,000 persons is coming soon.

## ADDITIONAL FAQs

- Are gender-neutral bathrooms required?**

All single-user toilet facilities, including accessible, family or assisted use toilet rooms, must be designated for use by any person.

- Do accessibility requirements apply?**

Even if a permit is not required based on the conditions, the owner is responsible to comply with accessibility and other requirements of The Philadelphia Code. These requirements include accessible toilet facilities and service points.

- Is the occupant load restricted?**

Only the occupant load of structures occupied by the public is regulated; however, the Department may require a minimum number of points of egress if the lot is enclosed.

- Are there any operational restrictions?**

All operations must comply with the [Philadelphia Fire and Property Maintenance Code](#). Some common issues:

- Open fire pits are prohibited. All appliances must comply with [Section 307](#) of the [Philadelphia Fire Code](#).
- Trash storage must comply with [Section 308](#) of the Philadelphia Property Maintenance Code. Trash collection must comply with the regulations of the Philadelphia Streets Department.

Additional restrictions may be imposed by other government departments or agencies.

## Questions?

Call 311 or (215) 686-8686 (if outside Philadelphia) or submit a permit or license related online via [www.phila.gov/li/get-help](http://www.phila.gov/li/get-help).

## Disclaimer:

This interpretation, policy or code application is intended to provide guidance to staff for consistency of review and is subject to change without notice. Application of this interpretation, policy or code application to specific projects may vary. There may be other ways to comply with the Code. If so, you are not required to use this method. You may want to investigate other options or consult with a professional identifying an equally code compliant solution.