

Welcome to the City of Boulder Special Events Guide



The City of Boulder hosts a variety of special events that enhance our community's social, economic, and environmental well-being. This guide helps event organizers navigate the permitting process, clarifying deadlines and requirements. Please read this guide before completing and submitting an online Special Event Application.

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Initial Steps

For first-time events or changes to renewal events, contact the Office of Special Events before finalizing your event concept or application. Early discussions with city staff can save time and provide valuable guidance.

Special Event Application and Permit Requirements

A Special Event Permit is required for all planned and promoted public activities conducted on public property that meet any of the following criteria:

- When the expected number of participants and/or spectators total 50 or more people; and/or
- When using tents, structures and/or sound amplification; and/or
- When providing, selling and/or distributing alcohol and/or food to the public; and/or
- When using and/or impacting public right of ways and/or pedestrian, vehicle, bike, or bus traffic.

NOTE: Advocacy activities, film permits, private park reservations, and events hosted on private property do not require a special event permit. See the FAQs for more information.

Event Classifications

Special events are categorized into three classes based on their impact on public property and required city support:

- **Class III:** Minimal impact, contained within a single public venue with no street closures or alcohol/food sales (except for licensed MFV's in good standing with the City of Boulder).
- **Class II:** Medium to large impact, with city support up to \$5,000.
- **Class I:** Significant impact, with city support over \$5,000. Includes dignitary or political events requiring coordination with multiple jurisdictions (e.g., CU, County, State, or federal officials).

Application Timeline

You may submit a Special Event Permit Application up to 364 days before the event. Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Incomplete applications will not be accepted, and late submissions may be denied.

Review Process

The Special Event Review Team (SERT), composed of representatives from various city departments, facilitates the review process. The review begins when the application is submitted and does not imply approval. The SERT may request additional information or documents. Delays in providing required information can result in denial or late fees.

Final Permit

After the SERT completes its review and the event organizer meets all requirements, a Special Event Permit may be issued. The permit is valid only for the approved venue, route, vendors, activities, and times. Non-compliance with permit terms or city requirements can result in event cancellation, penalty fees, denial of future applications, and/or a requirement for a cash deposit or surety bond.

Application Process, Timeline, and Required Documents

Overview

All event organizers must submit various documents to ensure a comprehensive review and approval process. Here are the essential documents and their submission timelines:

Required Documents for ALL Applications

- *Emergency Action Plan*: Details on medical services, security, and contingency measures.
- *Production Schedule*: Detailed timeline of event setup, activities, and teardown.
- *Site and/or Route Maps*: Detailed maps showing event layout and routes.
- *Vendor and/or Exhibitor Lists*: Detailed list showing all participating vendors/exhibitors.
- *Certificate of Insurance*: Valid certificate of insurance meeting the criteria.

Required Documents for SELECT Applications:

- *Method of Handling Traffic (MHT)*: Required for street or path impacts.
- *Parking Services Contract*: Required for impacts to paid parking.
- *Police Services Contact*: Required for police assistance.
- *Special Event Liquor Permit*: Required for alcohol sales.
- *Carnival License*: Required for carnival or mechanical amusements.
- *Menagerie License*: Required for live animal displays or amusements.
- *Large Tent Permit*: Required for tents over 700 square feet (or 400 with sidewalls).
- *Large Generator Permit*: Required for generators over 15,000kw.

Required Timeline for Applications:

- *364-120 Days Prior*: Submit initial application and event concept.
- *60 Days Prior*: Submit alcohol permit application, alcohol questionnaire, and MHT.
- *30 Days Prior*: Submit tent and generator applications and final site map.
- *14 Days Prior*: Submit final insurance certificates and final production schedules.
- *14 Days Prior*: Submit final vendor/exhibitor list.

Documents like the site map, vendor/exhibitor list, and others will be updated throughout the review process based on input from the Special Event Review Team. **Initial** documents are required 60 days in advance, with **finalized** versions needed at least 14 days in advance, following the timeline above. A permit cannot be issued until all items above are submitted and reviewed.

For more detailed information, visit the City of Boulder's Special Events website or contact the Office of Special Events at specialevents@bouldercolorado.gov.

Emergency Action Plan (Security, Health and Safety)

Overview

A comprehensive Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is required to address potential emergencies, medical needs, and security arrangements. Every event organizer is expected to adopt a proactive risk mitigation strategy tailored to your event location to prevent or minimize disruptions or crises.

Components

- ***Emergency Action Plan:*** Submit a comprehensive plan that includes information on the medical, security, and weather thresholds and contingencies. Please submit initial plan 60-days prior. You can start with the [Fillable Emergency Action Plan Template](#). **For Class III Events, the Emergency Action Plan requirement is fulfilled by completing this form.** For Class I and II Events, submission of a comprehensive Emergency Action Plan, including medical and security details specific to the event, will be required to accompany this form.
- ***Police Services Contact:*** If police services are requested (or required), you must request officers with [Boulder Police Special Events Staffing \(Detail Kommandar\)](#). Please request access at least 60-days prior to event.
- ***American Medical Response (AMR):*** In some cases, ambulances may be required by the city. Ambulances must provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) with a paramedic and EMT. On-site emergency assistance from AMR may also be needed. The Event Organizer must contact the AMR special event coordinator at least 30 days prior. AMR must arrive at least 30 minutes before the event begins.
- ***Boulder Fire Water Rescue Team (BFWRT):*** In some cases, the hiring of the of the BFWRT may be required by the city. The Boulder Fire Department determines the number of rescuers and other personnel required.

Role of the Police Department: The Boulder Police Department may require department staff and police vehicles to be present at the event to supplement the security plan and to provide additional presence during the event. These sworn officers are onsite to enforce municipal ordinances and state laws. It is not the responsibility of police officers to provide the services that are the job of private security or staff/volunteer marshals.

Additional Resources

- [Fillable Emergency Action Plan Template](#)
- [Event Safety Alliance Website \(FREE Event Safety Guide\)](#)
- [National Weather Service Weather Ready Event Planning Tools For Outdoor Events](#)

Public Right of Way (Streets, Pathways, Sidewalks) and Parking Spaces

Overview

Events impacting public streets, pathways, or other rights of way require specific permits and planning. Please note that use of the multi-use path system (including the Boulder Creek Path) requires review and approval from the Transportation and Mobility Department and may require an MHT or Notification Plan.

Components

- ***Method of Handling Traffic (MHT):*** An MHT is required for closures or modification of public roads and multiuse pathways. Please submit initial MHT 60-days prior.
- ***Parking Services Contract:*** A contract is required for reserving pay-to-park spaces and hiring Parking Enforcement Officers to tow or relocate remaining vehicles. Please submit a [Parking Services Formstack Application](#) 60-days prior.
- ***Police Services Contact:*** A contract is required for hiring off-duty officers to assist with traffic control in accordance with the MHT. Please request access to [Detail Kommandar](#) at least 60-days prior to event.
- ***Notifications:*** You are required to notify businesses and residences impacted by a closure or modification of public right of way, as well as deploy advance notifications along the route. To obtain physical addresses, please coordinate with your OSE permit liaison to contact the City of Boulder's IT GIS Team (NestlerJ@bouldercolorado.gov).
- ***RTD/Via Impacts:*** Transportation and Mobility staff will notify RTD and Via about any impacts to their routes and will inform you of any concerns. Applicants are no longer required to contact these agencies directly or provide a letter of support.

NOTE: The City of Boulder has determined that competitive events and races held on multi-use paths, including the Boulder Creek Path, pose an unreasonable impact to those who would otherwise use these facilities, paths and right of ways. As a result, the City of Boulder does not recommend approval of competitive activities on multi-use paths, including but not limited to activities that are timed, numbered, chipped and/or offer any awards, placements, or rankings.

Additional Resources

- [Parking Services Formstack Application](#)
- [Interactive Map of Multi-Use Path System](#)
- [Boulder Police Special Events Staffing \(Detail Kommandar\)](#)
- [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways \(MUTCD\)](#)

Vendors, Exhibitors, Food, and Alcohol

Overview

All vendors and exhibitors must meet specific health, safety, and licensing requirements. The City of Boulder requires all organizations and businesses coming into Boulder for Special Events to obtain a City of Boulder business license and file a sales and use tax return. Organizations permanently based in Boulder must hold a current "Business License". For those not permanently based in Boulder, a streamlined "Special Event License" is available at no cost.

Please note that even if no sales will be made, if you are a business or organization attending or sponsoring a special event, a license is still required. Nonprofit organizations that are not based in Boulder and are not selling anything are exempt. They must submit a certificate of nonprofit status. Please ensure this is included in your vendor/exhibitor list and uploaded to Eproval.

Components

- ***Vendor/Exhibitor List:*** Include all vendors, exhibitors, and sponsors using the Vendor List Template. Ensure their license numbers are included or direct them to apply for a [Special Event Business License](#). An initial list must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the event.
- ***Food Vendors/Mobile Food Vehicles (MFVs):*** Highlight on your vendor/exhibitor list which (if any) are food trucks. They must have a current [City of Boulder MFV license](#). If they do not have a City of Boulder MFV license, they must apply at least 60-days prior.
- ***Special Event Liquor Permit (SEP):*** If you are selling or serving alcohol at a special event you must apply for a [Special Event Liquor Permit \(City-Owned Property\)](#). Please submit your application at least 60-days in advance. You must also complete an [Alcohol Questionnaire](#). Afterwards, your OSE permit liaison can provide a signed map and permission letter which is required for the application. Once the site map is signed and submitted, no changes can be made without written approval. Be sure to review the [Sample Alcohol Map](#).
- ***Boulder County Public Health (BCPH):*** Submit a [Temporary Event Coordinator](#) application with Boulder County Public Health at least 14-days prior if you will be serving food.
- ***Carnival, Circus, or Menagerie License:*** Additional licenses may be required for activities such as carnivals, mechanical attractions, and menageries (e.g. petting zoos and animal exhibits). Please apply for the [Carnival, Circus, or Menagerie License](#) at least 60-days prior.

Tented Food Vendors: All tents and canopies must be flame-retardant and securely anchored to withstand inclement weather. Vendors must maintain at least 3 feet of clearance from open flames or grills to combustible materials, with propane tanks placed 10 feet away and secured upright. Charcoal grills must be stable and shielded to prevent tipping or public contact. Cooking or heating equipment must be at least 10 feet from exits or decorations, with an ABC-type fire extinguisher (minimum 40-B rating) required for each food vendor unless otherwise approved. Cooking equipment must be arranged to avoid public contact.

Non-Approved Vendors (Sales Tax): Sales Tax will contact any non-approved vendor once with a notice, and again if there is a specific issue to resolve. After that, it becomes the event organizer's responsibility to ensure the vendor/exhibitor has addressed the issue and is approved to attend. Non-approved vendors will not be permitted to participate. Failure to comply may result impact future event permit approvals.

Additional Resources

- [Business Licensing and Taxation for Special Events](#)
- [Temporary Event Food Establishment Requirements \(BCPH\)](#)
- [Currently Licensed MFV's](#)

Tents, Structures, Generators, Stages

Overview

Events involving temporary structures, heaters, or generators require fire safety measures and may require additional permits from the Boulder Fire Department and/or Planning and Development Services Department.

Components

- **Heaters:** Propane heaters must be identified on the site map and used in outdoor areas.
- **Generators and Light Towers:** Portable generators must be identified on the site map and used in outdoor areas with the restrictions outlined below. For towable generators (15KW+), an additional permit and inspections from the [City of Boulder Planning and Development Services and Fire Department](#) is required.
- **Tents/Canopies:** If the event includes a tent or multiple tents with walls more than 400 sq. ft., open on all sides more than 700 sq. ft., or multiple tents (open on all sides) placed side by side more than 700 sq. ft., an [additional permit and inspections](#) will be required.
- **Tent Addressing:** Events with more than 25 individual tents/booths must be numbered and these numbers must be used onsite to assist with emergency/medical calls. All tents shall have a numbered address posted on the front, upper left-hand side of the tent. Be sure to review the [Sample Site Map](#).
- **Temporary Structures:** If the event includes a temporary structure or build stage, an additional permit and inspections may be required
- **Generators:** Portable generators must be isolated from public contact by fencing or enclosure and placed at least 10 feet from combustible materials, tents, canopies, and structures, with exhaust directed away from them. Spare fuel is not approved to be stored onsite. An ABC-type fire extinguisher (minimum 40-B rating) must be present. Refueling must occur only when the generator has cooled, at least 20 feet away from ignition sources.

Additional Resources

- [Temporary Event Application \(Large Generators, Large Tents, Structures and Stages\)](#)
 - Type “Temporary Event” into search bar.
- [Temporary Sales or Outdoor Entertainment Application \(Private Property\)](#)
 - Type “Temporary Sales” into search bar.

Additional Considerations

Overview

Other essential aspects to ensure a successful event include accessibility, advertising, and waste management, and more. Please inquire with your OSE permit liaison with questions.

Components

- **Accessibility:** Event Organizers are required to comply with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). All Event venues, structures and activities shall be accessible to persons with disabilities. For more information about the Americans with Disabilities Act and compliance at events, please visit www.ada.gov or contact [Wendy Litman](#), City of Boulder's ADA Coordinator.
- **Advertising:** Submittal of the Special Event Application request does NOT reserve, hold or guarantee dates or venues, nor imply any approval of the event concept or Event. Event Organizers advertising an Event or collecting registration fees prior to the issuance of an approved permit do so at their own risk and cost.
- **Amplified Sound:** Events with Amplified Sound must always remain in compliance with [Boulder Revised Code 5-9-3](#), including set-up, event activities and break-down. Event Organizers are responsible for monitoring amplified sound noise levels throughout the Event to ensure compliance. Events not in compliance may be subject to citations, fines, permit revocation, and/or future permit denials.
- **Banners and Signage:** Temporary banners and signs may be placed on public property to promote the Event with prior written approval and according to Boulder Revised Code 8-6-11 and 9-9-21. City representatives may remove non-permitted décor and advertising in the public right of way or permitted venue area and the Event Organizer may be subject to fines and/or cost of removal.
- **Electricity and Water:** Use of city utilities must be approved in advance by your OSE permit liaison. All extension cords must be properly grounded, secured and covered to avoid creating a trip hazard.
- **Insurance:** For most Events, general liability insurance coverage, in the amount of \$1 million per occurrence with a \$2 million aggregate, naming the City of Boulder as additionally insured, must be acquired before an Event and maintained throughout the duration of the Event, including set-up and dismantle periods. The city may require Events with large crowds, pyrotechnic displays, inflatables, or other significant risks, to carry policies with higher limits.
- **Waste Removal:** Event Organizers must properly dispose of all waste throughout the term of the event and immediately upon conclusion of the event. All venues, routes, and areas (including event signage) must be returned to a clean condition equal to or better than it was found prior to the event. The City of Boulder no longer requires composting.
- **Parking Plan:** A specific parking plan may be required for events at Boulder Reservoir or when public parking spaces will be impacted beyond capacity. This plan should identify designated locations for guest and participant loading, unloading, and parking, including ADA-accessible spaces.
- **Water Activities Plan:** Required for events involving participants in or on water (e.g., at the Reservoir or Boulder Creek). Please consult your application point of contact for further information.

- *Restrooms Plan:* When public restrooms are unavailable or insufficient, a suitable number of portable restrooms and hand-washing stations must be provided. Use the calculator tool below to determine the necessary number of units. Custodial service fees may apply when public restrooms are used during an event.

Additional Resources

- [Working Towards Zero Waste Guidelines](#)
- [Pearl Street Mall Guidelines and Fee Schedule](#)
- [Open Space and Mountain Parks \(OSMP\) Permits](#)
- [Portable Restroom Calculator](#)
- [Special Events Certificate of Insurance](#)