

Special Event Process



A special event is a temporary outdoor activity held on private property and open to the general public, including but not limited to, seasonal sales, the display of goods and merchandise as part of a retail promotional activity, community or cultural events, musical events, celebrations, festivals, fairs, carnivals, and circuses.

Certain short-term events such as grand openings for retail stores may apply for a Tier-One Administrative Permit (AP). All other special events that do not meet the requirements for a Tier-One AP will qualify for Tier-Two AP and are limited to 60 days with seasonal sales limited to 45 days and carnivals and circuses limited to 21 days. This timeframe does not need to be consecutive. A program of events AP for both Tier-One and Tier-Two APs may be issued for a two-year period for recurring special events that do not have significant changes from one year to the next in terms of the expected number of attendees or the duration and extent of the event. The AP for a program of events may include multiple events occurring on consecutive or non-consecutive days and may be renewed for an additional period of up to five years. Please review the Zoning Ordinance for a list of other standards. The following provides an overview of the permit process:

Step 1

If your event requires closure of any public street, start by submitting a Road Use Permit to VDOT 45 days prior to the start date of your event.

Step 2

If your event does not require closure of any public street, or after you receive your VDOT approval, submit the required special event administrative permit materials to the County's Zoning Permits Section at least 30 days prior to the start date of your event.

Step 3

Zoning staff will review the provided information and either request additional information, approve your permit, or deny your permit. If approved, the letter will contain information on any next steps.



Potential Next Steps

Contacting the Health Department if any exterior sanitation facilities, such as portable toilets, are included or there is food being served

Marshal if any Fire Prevention Code permits are needed

Submitting an Exhibitor's Permit to the Animal Protection Police if the event involves the display or exhibition of animals (this is required at least 21 days prior to the event)

Submitting a building permit for certain structures, such as a large tent or amusement rides



Additional Resources and Contact Information:

Animal Protection Police	(703) 691-2131	fcpdanimalprotection@fairfaxcounty.gov
Fire Marshal	(703) 246-4803	fire.revenuepermits@fairfaxcounty.gov
Health Department (Food Service)	(703) 246-2444	hdehd@fairfaxcounty.gov
Health Department (Sanitation)	(703) 246-2201	hdehd@fairfaxcounty.gov
Permits Administration	(703) 222-0801	LDSbuildingpermits@fairfaxcounty.gov
VDOT (Arlington/Fairfax Permits Section)	(703) 259-1773	NOVAFairfaxPermits@VDOT.Virginia.gov
Zoning Permits Section	(703) 222-1082	DPZMailforZPRB@fairfaxcounty.gov

^{*}For more information on the special event administrative permit process, please contact the Zoning Permits Section.

Types of Events That May Need an Administrative Permit:

- Concerts, fairs, and festivals
- Charity fundraisers, road races and similar events
- Car, dog or horse shows
- Carnivals and circuses
- Drive-in movie nights
- Flea markets or other types of open-air market
- Grand openings and promotional events
- Holiday parties advertised and open to the general public
- Activities within Pop-up parks (concerts, festivals, etc.)
- Seasonal sales

Types of Events That May Not Need an Administrative Permit:

- Community pool cookout following a swim meet
- Events on property already approved for special events
- Garage sales
- Holiday parties for members of an organization and their guests
- Neighborhood block parties
- Company picnics
- Private events by a homeowner for their own guests, such as birthday parties, weddings, etc.
- Religious assembly outdoor gathering for parishioners and their guests
- Sidewalk sales accessory to a retail use

