

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Temporary Structure Permits

Updated July 15, 2004

The Seattle Building Code (SBC) requires permits for temporary structures like tents, reviewing stands, temporary office trailers, scaffolding structures, construction buildings, and similar portable or collapsible structures. Temporary structure permits must meet code requirements for fire, life safety, and structural elements (SBC Section 106.13).

Haunted houses and many other events also require a temporary certificate of occupancy (TCO) permit. For details, see Tip 120, *Getting a Certificate of Occupancy*.

In addition, a temporary use permit may be required for temporary structures or events. If planning on using a temporary structure for more than four weeks, read Tip 206, *Temporary Use Permits in Seattle*.

When a Temporary Permit Is Required

- **Stages, platforms, bleachers and scaffolding structures:** Permits are required when these overall structures are greater than 4 feet high from the floor or grade. The permits have a maximum six months time limit and the permit is not renewable.
- **Temporary office, classroom, or storage trailers:** These structures always require a Seattle DCI permit and must be a Washington State Labor & Industries approved trailer, i.e., Gold Seal, Black Seal or Red Seal trailers. The permits have a time limit of up to 18 months, and the permit is renewable once. For application requirements, see Tip 305, *Factory-Constructed Structures for Residential and Commercial Use*.
- **Construction buildings:** A separate permit is not required for temporary office or storage facilities associated with the permit for the construction of

a building on the same property. The construction building must be removed once the construction of the building is complete. A construction office or storage building located on an adjacent or different property does require a Seattle DCI permit.

- **Structures erected for events, festivals or promotions:** Permits are required when the structure is greater than 8 feet in height. The permits have a maximum six months time limit and are not renewable.
 - **Structures anchored to existing buildings (that weigh more than 2,000 pounds):** Examples are stage lighting, signs and artistic structures suspended from the roof or ceilings. A stamped letter and/or calculations from a structural engineer that documents that the existing structure is capable to support the new loads.
 - **Temporary haunted houses and temporary occupancies:** Both Seattle Fire Department permits and Seattle DCI permits are required for these events. Often, a temporary use permit is required by land use regulations (see Tip 206) and is combined with the Seattle DCI temporary structures permit.
 - **Site-built structures:** The permit requirements for custom designed and built temporary structures are determined on a case by case basis. Stamped engineering drawings may be required.
 - **Tents, canopies and similar facilities:** These structures require just one permit — either from the Fire Department or Seattle DCI. The Fire Department will issue the permit when the tent area exceeds 400 square feet or a canopy exceeds 200 square feet. For permit information, contact the Fire Department at (206) 386-1450.
- Seattle DCI will issue the permit if the following circumstances apply:
1. The structure is erected for more than four weeks.
 2. Structures are installed inside a tent such as stages, platforms or bleachers over 4 feet in overall height.



3. The structure is attached to buildings or permanent structures for support.
4. When the Fire Department determines the tent or structure requires a Building Code review for any reason, which may include an unusual shape, location, large area or height, type of occupancy or foul weather use.

Seattle DCI tent permits have a maximum six month time limit and the permit is not renewable.

Application Submittal Requirements

Permit applications may be submitted to Seattle DCI's Applicant Service Center (ASC), located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8850. Applications must include the following documents:

1. **An application form.** A completed ASC Counter Application form. These may be picked up at the ASC or they are available online at www.seattle.gov/SeattleDCI/toolsresources/.
2. **A copy of the Fire Dept. Place of Assembly Permit with all attachments.**
 - A "place of assembly permit" is required if more than 100 people will occupy any space during an event. Obtain this permit from the special events officer at the permit desk, Fire Marshall's Office, 301 Second Ave. S. (Second Avenue South and Main Street).
3. **Two sets of plans** showing the location and dimensions of the temporary structures and the following information:
 - Site plans showing the outline of property where the event will be held and the location of the structures on the site, **OR**
 - Floor plans showing the location of the temporary structure within a building and within an individual space or room. All exiting paths to an established exit system must be shown.
 - Show how the structure will be barrier free accessible. (if space is limited, a portable ramp may be stored on site or under a stage, and put in place when needed).
 - If the temporary structure will provide seating, show the number and location of the barrier free seating. For events with seating for more than 500 people, provide 6 wheelchair spaces plus one additional space for each 150 people over 500 (SBC Table 1108.2.2.1).

4. **Elevation drawings** of the structure(s) showing its height and how two or more separate structures will be integrated and how each structure will be supported. Examples: a canopy over a stage supported by guy wires to the ground, or a tent over bleachers anchored to a platform that is in turn anchored with helical anchors into the ground.
5. **A written statement** by the structure owner, lessee or manufacturer attesting that they will take responsibility for the structural integrity and installation of the structure. This letter must be written on company letterhead and must include the title of the person signing for the company. If a stage, platform, or bleachers will be used for an occupant load of 50 or more people, letter must state load limits in pound per square inch.
6. **Structure letter and/or calculations** from a Structural Engineer that documents that the existing structure is capable to support the new loads greater than 1,000 pounds.
7. **Permit fees** are determined from the current fee ordinance, plus the state surcharge. Fees are based per the total site and on not the total number of structures. The fee ordinance is available online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/fees/, or from the Seattle DCI Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.
8. **A Health Department review** is needed if there is a food related use that is not already permitted by the Health Department.
9. **Site Built Structures:** Stamped engineering drawings may be required. These drawings must clearly show structural load and engineering calculations. Please contact Seattle DCI for information specific to your project.

Waivers from Standards for Temporary Structures

- Barrier-free ramps can eliminate the wheel curbs at the sides of the ramp if guardrails are provided.
- Barrier-free ramps may use a 5' turning radius when the code otherwise requires a 6' turning radius.
- Minimum opening sizes in railings may be waived if OSHA or WISHA standards can be met.

Standards Plans for Recurring Events

A standard plan may be established for a recurring project. This requires a one-time review of engineering drawings of the temporary structure(s), and a modified review each subsequent year to verify that the annual installation matches the original plans. The structure design could be a modular system that would enable the size of the bleachers to vary from year to year.

To apply for the standard plan:

- Submit two sets of plans.
- Show exiting and barrier-free facilities on the plans.
- Include a letter each year from the property owner, manufacturer or the vendor stating they will accept the responsibility for the structural integrity and installation of the structure.
- If a special inspection is required on the original permit, it will also be required for the installation of the structure each subsequent year. A final report must be submitted to Seattle DCI before the permit will be finalized each year.

Seattle DCI will review standard plans for both Building Code and engineering issues once, and that approval will apply to all subsequent permit applications. The plan review for the subsequent permits will be simplified and faster, and the permit fees will be reduced. Generally it is cost-effective to establish the standard plan if you will use it at least four times.

Once the standard plan is issued Seattle DCI will keep an 11" x 17" copy of the approved standard plan (that you will supply) on file. The standard plan will not expire, but it must be revised each time the Seattle Building Code is updated.

The first year that you apply for the permit, Seattle DCI will actually create two permits: one for the standard plan and one for the first year's temporary installation of the structure. In each subsequent year, you may apply for a permit based on the standard plan and the plans that you submit must match the original approved standard plans. Seattle DCI will need two sets of plans, with a plot or site plan and a special inspection form if required by the original permit.

There is a one-time fee to establish the standard plan based on the cost to install the structure (the cost to lease the structure should not be included). The fee amount may change from year to year.

For More Information

If you have questions about temporary structure permits or would like more specific information about your project, contact a permit leader in the Seattle DCI Applicant Services Center (ASC). The ASC is located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8850.

The following Seattle DCI Tips also provide helpful information:

- Tip 106, *General Standards for Plans and Drawings*
- Tip 206, *Temporary Use Permits*

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of Seattle DCI **Tips**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Tools & Resources" page of our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this Tip, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.