Winter Tent and Portable Heater Permitting Step-By-Step Guide

10/07/2020
When is a Permit Required?

A permit is required when installing a tent and/or deploying a portable heater outdoors.

A permit is required whether the tent or heater will be on public space or private property. This includes open courtyards and rooftops.

A permit is required even if you already have a tent or a heater.

A permit is required even if you have a permit for outdoor food service in public space.
Application Requirements

• For applications using only private property, you will need to provide your Certificate of Occupancy.

• For applications using public space, the permit authorizing food service on public space should also be provided. These include:
  – Sidewalk Café permit or current Certificate of Use
  – Temporary Sidewalk Table Service permit
  – Parklet Permit
  – Streatery Permit

• Site plan to scale. Hand-drawn on graph paper is acceptable. It does not need to be engineer or architect stamped.

• Specifications for the tent and/or heater.
  – This includes the flame-retardant certification for the tent fabric

• There aren’t new insurance requirements for tent/heater permits.
Applications can be submitted online at tops.ddot.dc.gov

You will need information about the business (e.g. address, Certificate of Occupancy), the site plan, and the specifications.

• Remember that food service must already have been approved, whether through licensing or a public space permit.

You can combine multiple areas on a single permit (e.g. sidewalk, courtyard, and rooftop).

• Each area will need its own site plan.
• If different tents or heaters are requested, please identify where each fixture will be located on the site plan(s).

There are no fees for the permit.
Applications will be reviewed by specific agencies:

- Heater applications will be reviewed by Fire/EMS
- Tent applications will be reviewed by DCRA and DC Health
- Applications with both fixtures will be reviewed by all three (3) agencies.

Applications will be responded to within three (3) business days of submission. We hope to approve all applications in this timeframe, but additional information may be requested in order to approve applications and issue permits.
The following pages provide a step-by-step guide for submitting permit applications in the transportation online permitting system, TOPS, at tops.ddot.dc.gov.

Before submitting an application, the user needs to register as a user in TOPS.

Applications can be submitted on behalf of a business by others, such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Main Streets. The permittee must be the business that will erect the tent and/or deploy the portable heater.

A single application can include both public space and private property uses. If the business has multiple locations, a separate application must be submitted for each location.
After you login to TOPS, select Construction/Excavation Permit.

Select “Apply for a Construction Permit” from the jump page.
When selecting the Start Date, you can select a date in the grayed section. Please provide a date at least one week out from when the application is submitted. DDOT and our partner agencies plan to approve these applications within three (3) business days. Additional information may be needed.

Click OK when you receive the notice that you’ve selected a date earlier than the normal review time for construction permits.

Select December 31, 2020 as the Expiration Date, which aligns with the Mayor’s Order extending the public health emergency.
You can enter the business name and owner on this page if you’d like. The business name should match the Permittee, which will be entered on a later page.

Enter the address of the business where the fixtures will be placed. Do not enter a block or an intersection.

Use the Search/Verify button to check the address entered against the Master Address Repository (MAR). Only MAR-verified addresses are acceptable.
Please review the information before continuing to the next page.
Permit Application: Associate a Project

You do not need to create a new project for this permit. Projects are commonly used for larger scale work, such as building construction and utility capital improvement projects.
Select all of the applicable types of winter tents and heaters you plan to use. Remember to select the proper types based on whether the tents and heaters will be in a Streatery/sidewalk café on public space or on private property. You can have both tents and heaters in the same application. You can apply for both public space and private property in the same application. Please do not include any other types of work in this permit.
Include the following text in the box to describe the work in detail:

“This permit provides Outdoor Dining Relief for winter months with safe social distancing during the District’s ReOpen plan.”
Please include the tent dimensions. Use the Add button if there are multiple tents. If the tents cover 400 square feet or more, a separate DCRA permit may be required. Please identify the number of heaters that will be used. The Mayor has waived all fees for these permits.
Agent and Contractor information are optional. Agent information should be included if the application is being submitted by a BID or Main Street (the Agent) on behalf of a business (the Permittee).
Upload the specs for the tents and heaters here.

Upload the site plan here. It needs to be to scale and can be hand-drawn (use graph paper). This is also where you upload the Certificate of Occupancy and, if using public space, the existing public space permit allowing use of public space for food service. If you don’t already have a public space permit please submit the appropriate application. For sidewalk cafes, please upload the sidewalk café permit or the current Certificate of Use.
**PERMITTEE**

For permittee, please enter the name and address of the business.
This should not be the name of the person who is completing the application.
You can use the First Name and Last Name boxes to enter the business’s complete name.

**OWNER**

For owner, please enter the name and address of the property owner where the business is conducted.
If it is the same as the permittee, select “Same as Above”.
Read the Notice in the gray box and check the box.
Complete the process by clicking the Submit button at the bottom of the page.
This page confirms your application has been submitted. You will receive emails automatically as the application is processed. (Emails come from TOPS-no-reply@dc.gov so please add it to your safe senders list to avoid emails going to your spam folder.)
The business must have the permit and approved site plan on site and available for inspectors.

Sites may be inspected for compliance with the approved plans and permit conditions.

Permits will be in effect while the Mayor’s Health Emergency Order is in effect. They will be automatically extended whenever the Mayor’s Order is extended.