

Requirements for Assembly Operational Permit

The District of Columbia has adopted the International Fire Code (2015 edition), including the code supplement listed in DCMR (section 12-H). This section outlines the requirements for assembly occupancies to obtain an Operational Permit from the DC Fire and EMS Department for events having an occupancy of 100 persons or more. The goal of this permit process is to ensure the safety of all occupants in a space when the use and occupancy is altered from what it was originally designed for.

Venues that hold multiple events with the same event layout and site plans are allowed to submit a “standard” event application annually. This will allow the venue to submit one set of site plans and receive one permit to hold any event that conforms to the approved layout. Any changes/alterations to the permitted and approved “standard” site plan will require a new plan review and permit to be issued. Any venue hosting an event using the “standard” site plan must notify the Office of the Fire Marshal no less than 5 business days prior to the event indicating the nature of the event and anticipated occupancy load. This notification shall occur via email and should be sent to “femsevents@dc.gov”.

Failure to obtain a permit or failure to notify the Office of the Fire Marshal of Assembly events are a violation of the Fire Code, each of which may be assessed a fine of \$2,000 per offense.

Applications for the permit can be found at the Fire/EMS department website, or by going to <https://dcwebforms.dc.gov/fems/permit1/>. There is a \$150 application fee which covers the cost of the plan review, plan approval, and an onsite inspection (if needed). Permit applications and Site Plans should be submitted for review as early as possible to ensure the necessary changes can be made prior to event set-up.

All permit applications must include a site plan that must be uploaded with the application, and include the following information:

- **Exits** – All exits being utilized for the event space and the exit dimensions.
- **Separation distances** - The separation distances must be indicated for all aisles, exits, stages, confidence monitors and any other obstruction in the egress pathways.
- **Rounds and Theatre sets** - The plan needs to include the distances the tables are set from each other and the row width. Table distances should be measured from the table edge to the other object (i.e., the table edge to the wall or table edge to table edge).
- **Aisles** - Must be wide enough for the number of people that will have to utilize them in the event of an emergency. They must lead to an exit in either direction.
- **Occupancy** - The plan must include the number of occupants or expected number of occupants.
- **Food and Buffet** - All food & buffet sets as well as high top tables must be on the plan.



Once the plan is reviewed it will be sent to the “contact person” listed on the application for revisions (if needed). Once the plan is approved, the stamped plan and a permit for the event will be sent to the “contact person” and the event location. If there are any changes to the plan after it is approved, it must be emailed back to the original reviewer to approve the changes. The approved permit and site plan must be maintained on site and available for review upon request of the Code Official.

Special considerations – these may require additional Operational Permits as noted below:

1. **Vehicles inside the building** - Will require Vehicle Display Permit and must comply with the following requirements.

- a. Batteries are disconnected.
- b. Fuel in fuel tanks does not exceed one-quarter tank or 5 gallons (19 L) (whichever is less).
- c. Fuel tanks and fill openings are closed and sealed to prevent tampering.
- d. Vehicles, boats, or other motor craft equipment are not fueled or defueled within the building.



2. **Cold spark devices** – “Cold Spark” devices are classified as pyrotechnics, and will require an Open Flame Permit and a Fire Watch Permit



3. **Open Flame** - All Open Flames require an Open Flame Permit.

An event can have up to six (6) Sterno type warming devices, prior to a permit being required



4. **LP Gas or Propane** – Propane is not permissible for use inside of a building. Propane for outdoor use requires a propane permit.



5. **Water based Fog Machines** – Fog machines have the potential to impact the Fire Alarm system and may require an Operational Permit and a Fire Watch.



6. **Tents, Canopies and Structures with Roofs** - If the structure is larger than 120 square feet it will be required to have a smoke detector to be installed in all areas.



Any of these types of permits can be applied for on our website at: fems.dc.gov, if there are any questions please contact our office at (202) 727-1614 or email us at fems.fireprevention@dc.gov