

This guide details **building and fire permit requirements** for restaurants and bars that have added outdoor dining space under the city’s temporary program for these expansions. For program information, public health requirements, street closures, liquor licensing, and other details, please download the complete [Program FAQs](#).

### Quickly winterizing an outdoor patio without permits

If being erected on a temporary basis (180 days or less):

- Tents under 200 square feet in size do not need permits.
- Other structures (including greenhouses and personal domes) under 120 square feet in size do not need permits.

“Tents” are any structure, enclosure or shelter – with or without sidewalls – made of fabric or other pliable materials. Other material types (made of glass, having a steel base, etc.) are not considered a tent.

Permits are not needed for lights and heat plugged into an outdoor electrical outlet.

### Building and fire permits

Table 1 (continued on page 2) summarizes which permits are needed for common installations.

Table 1: Installations that require permits

	Operational permit (Denver Fire Dept.)	Commercial construction permit (2-day plan review)	Electrical quick permit (no plan review)	Electrical permit (2-day plan review)	Mechanical/ plumbing permit (2-day plan review)
Structures under 120 sq. ft.	<i>No permits necessary</i>				
Tents under 200 sq. ft.	<i>No permits necessary</i>				
Tents 200 sq. ft. or more*	✓				
Raised decks		✓			
Fences, barriers or partitions over 5’ 9” in height		✓			
Patio coverings and structures 120 sq. ft. or more		✓			
Building-mounted awnings/structures		✓			
Plug-in lights or electric heat	<i>No permits necessary</i>				
Gas-fired temporary heating	✓				
Natural gas heaters tied into the building’s utilities			✓		✓
Electrical installations of 20 amps or less			✓		
Electrical installations of circuits over 20 amps**				✓	
Generators				✓	



- \* Tents over 400 square feet will require a more extensive review and permitting from Denver Fire.
- \*\* Electric heaters that are hard-wired into the building's utilities will generally be over 20 amps.

*Tents*

Tents that are 200 sq. ft. or more can be used with an operational permit from the Denver Fire Department.

If you are purchasing a tent, please make sure the manufacturer's information confirms the tent meets NFPA 701's flame propagation testing requirements for flammability. Also make sure to check the tent manufacturer's specifications for how much snow the tent can withstand. If the snow load on the tent in winter exceeds this amount, the tent will need to be cleared of snow or it cannot be occupied on those days.

Tents/canopies cannot impede access, egress or Fire Department connections (FDC). Tents/canopies can only be erected for a maximum of 180 days in a 12-month period per the fire code. Extensions may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

*Propane heat*

Propane heaters can be used with an operational permit from the Denver Fire Department. Due to safety risks, Denver Fire does not allow propane or gas-fired heating sources under tents or canopies; however, temporary propane heaters can be placed outside of the tent to blow hot air into the tented area.

*Connecting into the building's utilities*

Alternatively, electric or natural gas heaters connected to the building's utilities from the existing restaurant can be used. Community Planning and Development will require electrical and/or plumbing permits if you are connecting to the building's utilities. Instructions for a fast, two-day review and permit are on page 3.

**How to apply for an operational permit from Denver Fire**

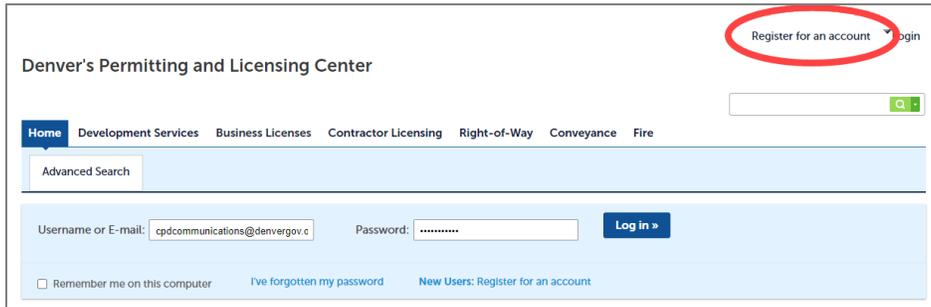
Use this application for...

- Tents over 200 square feet
- Temporary propane or gas heat

To apply...

1. Go to [denvergov.org/epermits](http://denvergov.org/epermits) and click "**Enter e-permits.**"
2. First-time e-permits users will need to create an account.

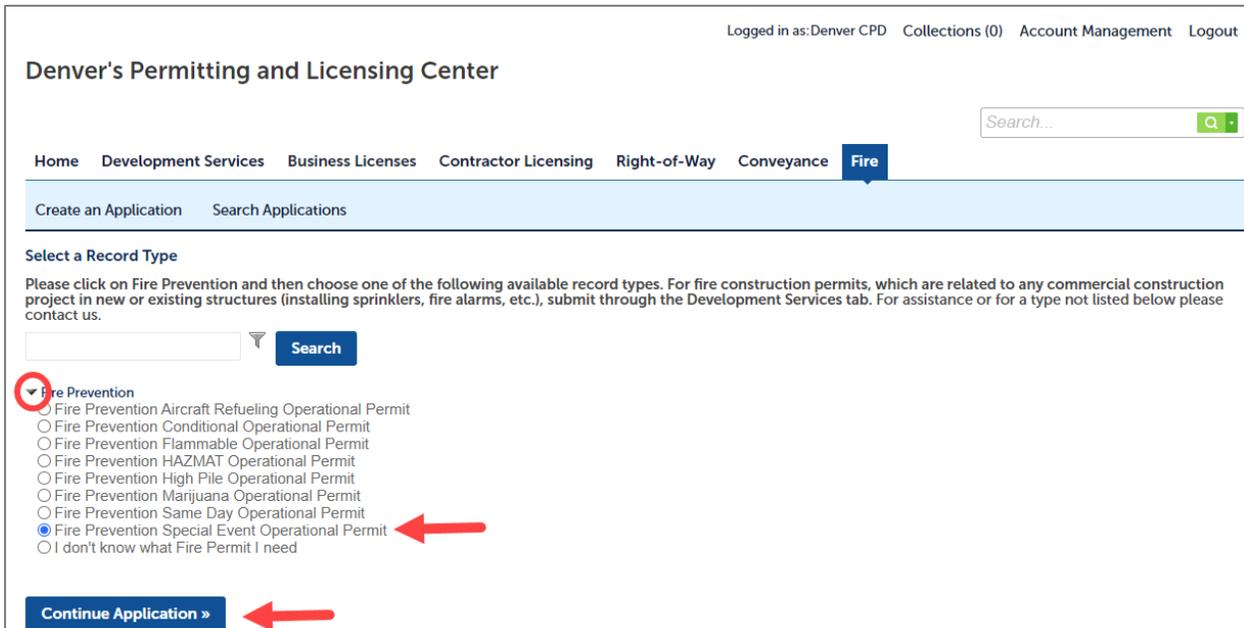
**Questions?**  
**Denver Fire Department**  
 Captain Steven Holtz  
[Steven.Holtz@denvergov.org](mailto:Steven.Holtz@denvergov.org)  
 (720) 913-3448  
 Or [firecodequestions@denvergov.org](mailto:firecodequestions@denvergov.org)



3. Once you have signed in, select the **Fire tab** and then “create an application.”



4. Follow the prompts. When prompted to “select a record type,” open the drop-down arrow next to “fire prevention” and select the option for a “fire prevention special event operational permit.” Hit continue and then follow the prompts to complete the special event operational permit application.



**How to apply for building and mechanical, electrical, or plumbing permits**

Building plans submitted for review must be prepared and signed by licensed architects and engineers. Visit [denvergov.org/buildingcode](http://denvergov.org/buildingcode) for a [step-by-step guide on electronic signatures](#) before you apply for permits.

The city strives to average a two-day review time for permits issued under this program. Some projects may take longer depending on the scope and complexity of the installation.

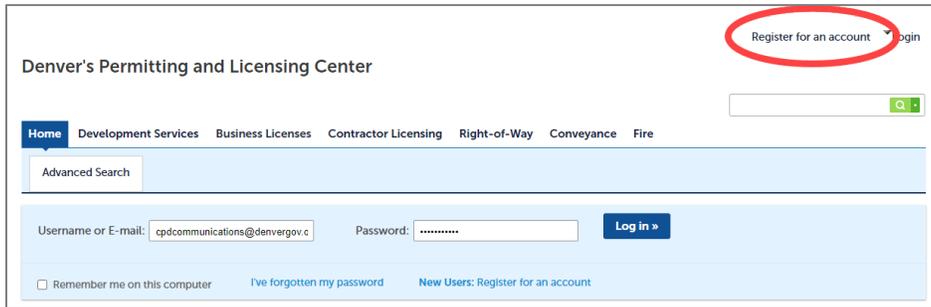
Use this application for...

- Construction
- Permanent connections to existing utilities

To apply...

1. Go to [denvergov.org/epermits](http://denvergov.org/epermits) and click **“Enter e-permits.”**
2. First-time e-permits users will need to create an account.

**Questions?**  
 Commercial construction:  
[ArchStruc.Review@denvergov.org](mailto:ArchStruc.Review@denvergov.org)  
 Electrical:  
[Electrical.Review@denvergov.org](mailto:Electrical.Review@denvergov.org)  
 Mechanical and plumbing:  
[MechPlumb.Review@denvergov.org](mailto:MechPlumb.Review@denvergov.org)



3. Once you have signed in, select the **Development Services tab** and then “apply for a permit.”



4. Follow the prompts. When prompted to select a permit type, choose **"Building Log"** for any permit type requiring plan review (includes two-day commercial construction, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical permits). For electrical permits that do not need plan review (under 20 amps), select "electrical permit" under "Quick Permits."
5. When prompted to enter a "description of work," write **"temporary outdoor expansion program"** and select the "Commercial Walk Through Project" checkbox in order to receive the fast, two-day review time.
6. After your permit is issued and you have completed the work, it must be inspected. Visit [denvergov.org/buildinginspections](http://denvergov.org/buildinginspections) for instructions on how to schedule an inspection.

**Select a Permit Type :**

- ▼ **Quick Permits**
  - Boiler and AC Permit
  - Electrical Permit
  - Mechanical Permit
  - Plumbing Permit
  - Roofing and Siding Permit
- ▼ **Submit Building Plans for Review**
  - Administrative Modifications
  - Building Log

**Step 3: Project Details > Project Information**

**Description of Work**

\* Please detail the type and extent of work to be done under this permit

**Description of Work:**

**"Temporary Outdoor Expansion Program"**

Will be installing a 450 sq. ft. tent with electric heat

[spell check](#)

The outdoor expansion program for restaurants and bars is a temporary program, and the review/permitting requirements in this guide reflect the temporary nature of the installation. The primary concern for the temporary permits is safety. If you wish to apply for permits to make any of these installations permanent, many other standard requirements, including zoning, parking, energy code requirements, and professional design and engineering for new occupancy loads, will likely have an effect. Projects that desire to keep these installations at the end of the temporary program should plan for approximately 3-4 months of design, review, and permitting.

Visit [denvergov.org/restaurantpermits](http://denvergov.org/restaurantpermits) for an online permitting guide for permanent patios, remodels, and more.