



Guidelines for Winterizing Outdoor Business Activities 2020-2021

Outdoor Structures

All structures

- All outdoor structures should provide at least one side open to allow for air circulation to reduce the possibility of COVID-19 transmission. Four-sided tents may be approvable if sufficient air circulation can be assured.
- Structures in approved on-street parking spaces must be no taller than nine feet.
- Except in the 100 block of King, a straight and continuous five feet of sidewalk is required to be maintained at all times.
- The placement of structures must be positioned to maintain a minimum eight-foot wide pathway between a building's doors and the street. A minimum three feet clearance must be maintained around Fire Department Connections (FDC) in all directions with clear path to street. Fifteen feet of clearance is required around fire hydrants.
- Structural materials must have a fire-resistant certification or flame certification showing the material is fire-rated and noncombustible.

Tents

- Tent sizes and required approvals:
 - Less than 200 square feet - do not require City permit approvals.
 - 200 square feet or more - Fire Prevention Permit (*see page 3 for application details and staff contact*).
 - 900 square feet or more - Fire Prevention Permit and Building Permit (*see page 3 for application details and staff contact*).
- The maximum period of time that a tent with a permit can remain in continuous use shall not

exceed 180 days. At the end of this period, the tent will have to be re-installed with a new permit and inspection.

- Open flames and open flame or fuel fired heating appliances shall not be used in or under tents or canopies.
- Required building exits cannot discharge into or through a tent. Tents must be located away from building exits and exit discharge, and cannot obstruct fire department access to buildings, fire hydrants, or building fire department connections.
- Regardless of tent size, all tents must be adequately anchored to resist wind and tent movement during weather. During periods of wind or anticipated weather events, smaller pop up tents should be taken down each day. Snow conditions and snow load should also be considered for larger tents that are to remain in place.

Hard surface structures:

- Individual "pods" with limited air circulation are not recommended as they are difficult to disinfect properly between guest parties.
- These may be installed for up to 180 days to qualify under the State Building Code as a temporary structure. A Building Permit is required (*see page 3 for application details and staff contact*).
- Disinfect the inner surfaces between parties and leave the windows and doors open for 15-30 minutes in between guests.

Awnings over sidewalks

- Awnings must be retractable and provide at least a seven-foot height clearance at its lowest point.
- Allowed with Building Permit approval (*see page 3 for application details and staff contact*).
- For awnings proposed in an historic district, submit applications to the Historic Preservation staff and they will administratively review proposals prior to the building permit review and allow for a temporary approval until November 2023. Awnings that remain after that time will require BAR approval.

Heating

All outdoor heating equipment

- All heating elements must adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for installation and use.
- The placement of heating elements must be positioned to maintain a minimum eight-foot wide clearance between a building's front doors and the street. A minimum three feet clearance must be maintained around Fire Department Connections (FDC) in all directions with a clear path to street. Fifteen feet of clearance is required around fire hydrants.

Propane (LP-Gas) heaters (includes mushroom heaters)

- A fire prevention permit and site approval must be obtained for each person or business that uses or stores any amount of LP gas on site prior to initial use (*see page 3 for application details and staff contact*).
- May not be used under a tent or canopy.
- LP gas cylinders and fuel fired heaters shall not be stored or used inside of buildings, under tents, canopies and coverings, or on rooftops and in basements or other areas below grade.
- LP gas cylinders shall be kept secure and stored upright and in a position where the valves are protected or in an appropriate rated cage or enclosure. Cylinders cannot be stored unsecured on the street or sidewalk.
- LP gas cylinders must be secured when in use or in storage.

- LP gas cylinders must be checked for leaks prior to each use. Leaking LP gas cylinders shall not be used. Upon discovery of any leaking LP gas cylinder, the flow of gas shall be shut off immediately and use of the cylinder or device shall be discontinued immediately. If the flow of gas cannot be secured, the Alexandria Fire Department shall be notified immediately. Leaking cylinders shall be returned to the supply vendor immediately.
- An ABC type fire extinguisher, minimum of 10-pound size, must be located anywhere LP gas heating devices are in operation and must have a current annual inspection tag.
- Empty or spare LP gas cylinders must be located in a secure cage designed for LP gas storage. LP storage cages shall be marked with proper NFPA 704 signage, LP gas, and NO SMOKING signage.
- In area subject to vehicle impact, LP gas devices, cylinders and cages must be protected by adequate vehicle impact protection. LP gas heaters and cylinders shall not be located on any street or near any potential source of ignition or accidental impact from passing vehicles.
- All LP gas heaters shall be used, stored, and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, which shall be kept on site and made available to the Fire Marshal upon request.
- All LP gas heaters must be UL listed and certified for outdoor use
- LP gas heaters and cylinders shall not be used or stored within 5 feet of any building opening, exit, window and shall not be located near any electrical equipment or meters. LP gas appliances and cylinders cannot obstruct any exit or pedestrian right of way. Clearances shall always be maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Portable Electric Heaters

- Electric heaters may be used in a structure or tent.
- Electrical heating devices that are to be used outdoors must be UL listed for outdoor use and shall be listed for commercial use.
- The source of electrical power must be of adequate capacity to safely handle the power needs of the heating appliance. It is recommended that the electrical service be evaluated by a licensed electrician to ensure that the electrical service has breakers and outlets adequate to handle the electrical demands of the heating appliance and the power supply is overall safe for use to prevent the possibility of overloading a circuit.
- Portable electric heaters shall be located at least 3 feet from any combustible materials and cannot be located where they cause obstructions to any exits or pedestrian right of way.
- If extension cords are used, they are intended only for temporary use. Use of extension cords shall be used only if necessary and must be UL listed and rated for outdoor use. The cords must be of proper size to handle the electrical load and requirements of the heating appliance. Cords shall be unplugged and stored at the end of each use every day. Extension cords shall not be plugged together or used in conjunction with any power strips. Extension cords shall be used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- All electrical cords shall be utilized so that they do not create a trip hazard. Electrical cords shall not be used in areas of standing water. Electrical cords shall not be located in any areas subject to vehicle traffic where they can be damaged by vehicles running over them. Electrical cords shall not be located in areas subject to pedestrian traffic without the use of properly designed and rated cord protectors. Electrical cords shall not be run through ceilings, under rugs or equipment.
- Hard wired or permanent heating appliances will require electrical permits and approval from the Office of Code Administration (*see staff member to contact on page 3 for building permits*).
- Electrical appliances and cords shall be free of defects, damage, splices or damaged or worn insulation and shall be in good overall condition. Any devices that are observed to be unsafe shall be ordered to be removed from service immediately.

Safety

- The use of masks is required at all times except when patrons are eating or drinking.
- Tables must be spaced to ensure that when seated, the guests at each party are separated from the seated guests of another party by at least six feet.
- Sanitation practices must comply with requirements of [Forward Virginia Phase Three](#).
- Social distancing requirements must be maintained between adjacent dining areas for separate businesses.

Applying for Permits

Fire Prevention Permits and Building Permits

Apply at: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Permits>. After registering with APEX, go to “apply” and scroll down to Building Permit or Fire Prevention Permits. Permit fees are temporarily waived for applications related to “winterizing” outdoor business operations. Direct questions to Henry Hollander at henry.hollander@alexandriava.gov, 703.746.4213 or 571.310.1020 (telework).

Outdoor Business Expansion Permits

For restaurants, retail businesses and fitness uses within the [King Street area](#), contact Alexa Powell at alexa.powell@alexandriava.gov or for these uses in all other areas of the City, contact Natalie Brown at natalie.brown@alexandriava.gov. No fees are required. Request forms for restaurants are found [here](#); for retail businesses are found [here](#); and for fitness uses are found [here](#).

October 17, 2020