

SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATION POLICY & GUIDEBOOK

PURPOSE

The Special Event Policy Guidebook provides a comprehensive resource for residents and business owners to understand the process of obtaining a Special Event Permit (SEP) in San Marcos. It ensures events are consistent with the City's municipal code guidelines and all other applicable rules and regulations.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Before applying for a Special Event Permit, ensure you have the following information ready:

- Contact information
- Event date, schedule, location, estimated attendance and detailed description
- Details on any amplified sound, live animals, pyrotechnics, and other event specifics
- Site plan/map
- Proof of insurance

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

There are different event permits depending on the specifics of your event. These include:

Special Event Permit (SEP): A Special Event Permit grants the applicant authorization to host an event within city limits that deviates from regular day-to-day activities. These events could include festivals, parades, marathons, street fairs, concerts, etc.

Youth Sports Council (YSC) Event: This permit application is for YSC Member Organizations only and covers events such as Opening/Closing Day, and Tournaments.

City-Managed Event Permit: A Staff Event Permit grants a City Department authorization to host a City event within city limits that deviates from regular day-to-day activities. These events could include fundraisers, concerts, holiday street fairs, or movies in the park events.

Film Permit: A Film Permit grants the applicant authorization to film in city parks, trails, facilities, streets, or sidewalks—and may also be required for private property locations if the scope of the event includes disruptions to the public right-of-way.

Block Party Permit: A Block Party Permit grants the applicant authorization to host a block party on a city street or within a residential neighborhood that closes off the applicants' street to traffic.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

1. **Submission Deadline:** Online applications are required 60 days prior to events with road closures and 30 days for all others. **No applications will be accepted less than 21 days prior to event date and all applications received less than 30 days from event date will be charged an expedite fee.**

2. **Application Review:** The City reviews the application and routes it to relevant departments for comments and conditions.
3. **Fee Collection:** The Applicant must pay all fees in full prior to final permit issuance from the City.
4. **Permit Issuance:** Upon approval, applicants will receive a packet with conditions of approval that must be adhered to for the duration of the event.
5. **Additional Permit Information:** Fully executed permits received by the applicant from other agencies, such as, but not limited to, the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control or San Diego County, must be provided to City staff before the event date.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

The Applicant is required to provide general liability certificate of insurance and additional insured endorsements naming the City of San Marcos and their elected and appointed boards, officers, agents, employees and volunteers in the amount of \$1 million for each occurrence and \$2 million general aggregate.

The name of the applicant and the name of the insured on the certificate must match. Endorsement pages must be included with the submitted general liability certificate.

Applicant understands that additional insurance may be required at the City's direction and request. Failure to comply with insurance requirements shall be a material breach of the permit and could result in refusal of permit issuance in the future.

Additional Insurance

The Applicant may be required to provide proof of Automobile Liability "owned," "hired," or "non-owned" coverage with a minimum of \$1 million for each accident when automobiles are included as part of the event.

If a fixed wing aircraft or helicopter is used during the event, in addition to the insurance requirements listed above, the Applicant must provide aviation insurance with a minimum of \$5 million for each accident.

If filming occurs at multiple sites or contain vehicles, applicant must provide proof of Automobile Liability "owned," "hired," or "non-owned" coverage with a minimum of \$1 million coverage for each accident.

Required insurance can be purchased through a city-approved provider upon request. Please contact specialeventpermits@san-marcos.net for more information and rates. **All insurance documentation must be provided at the time the application is submitted.**

OTHER PERMITS / LICENSES / TRAININGS / CERTIFICATES

Various permits **may** be required depending on the specifics of your event. As you work through the application process, events that trigger an additional permit will be notified. Some additional permits that may be required include:

Right-of-Way Permit: A Right-of-Way permit is required if any traffic control device or fixed/stationary table, tent, canopy, or other vendor setup is placed within public roadways, sidewalks, bicycle routes, or travel lanes or if vendors are in the right-of-way using non-moveable equipment (e.g., anchored tents, fixed tables). Traffic control plans must be stamped by a registered Traffic Engineer or Civil Engineer. **Block Parties** do not require a Traffic Control Plan, but our Traffic Engineers require all reflective barricades to be noted on the site plan.

Events with potential impact to residential or public right-of-way areas may require advanced notification to affected residents. If required, staff will inform applicants of required notifications and applicants will be responsible for providing approved notification at their own expense.

For specific questions related to ROW permits, contact the Traffic Engineering Division at engineeringdivision@san-marcos.net

Health & Safety Permit: A Health & Safety Permit is required for events with tents greater than 400 square feet, canopies greater than 700 square feet, carnival rides of any kind, and generators supplying receptacles not mounted on the generator.

For the installation of tents and canopies, a plan denoting the anchorage, fire extinguisher locations, and any additional information requested by City staff is required.

For specific questions related to your Health and Safety Permit, contact the Building Department at (760) 744-1050, extension 3244, or buildingpermits@san-marcos.net

Signage Permit: A maximum of 2 banners, not to exceed a combined total of 60 SQFT, are permitted to be placed on the premises of the event up to 2 weeks prior to the event date. All banners must adhere to the following parameters:

- Cannot be placed in the right-of-way
- Not permitted to be attached and/or affixed to any trees or shrubbery
- Cannot interfere with either pedestrian or vehicular sight distance
- Cannot interfere with any view corridor or obstruct visibility to any existing businesses
- Cannot interfere with any existing permanent sign
- Cannot block any ADA access or pathways
- No signage is permitted for block party permits

If an applicant wishes to have signage outside these specifications, they can contact the Planning Department for more information on obtaining temporary sign permit.

Alcoholic Beverage Control License: A permit from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control is required. A copy of the ABC license must be provided to the city before the event.

Alcohol servers will need to complete the Responsible Beverage Sales and Service Training prior to the event.

Event organizers that wish to have alcohol at events will be required to hire security personnel. For outdoor events, an applicant is required to create a Beer Garden, or fence the area, where the alcohol is dispensed and

consumed. Dimensions and exact location of the Beer Garden, or fenced area, must be provided in the event site plan.

Alcohol is not permitted at an event held for a person under 21 years of age and where the majority of participants will be under 21 years of age. This clause applies to events on City-owned property. For events on private property, this requirement may be enforced at the discretion of the City based upon the assessment of the event and its impact to public property and/or public right-of-way, particularly in situations where a permit is being required.

For specific questions related to ABC licenses and sales and service training, visit [ABC](#), call (916) 419-2500, or email headquarters@abc.ca.gov

For specific questions related to obtaining property owner signatures for City-owned property, contact the Special Event Coordinators at (760) 744-1050, or specialeventpermits@san-marcos.net to make arrangements.

County Health Permit: A public health permit is required by law for all retail food facilities.

For specific questions related to obtaining a public health permit in San Diego County, visit [Department of Environmental Health and Quality](#), or call (800) 253-9933.

Business License: The City of San Marcos requires all businesses within city limits to have a valid business license. Doing business in the city, even temporarily, is defined as being located in or entering into the city to conduct business. This includes businesses based in other cities that enter San Marcos as part of their work, such as contractors and delivery companies.

For specific questions related to obtaining a business license, visit [City of San Marcos: Business License](#), call (760) 744-1050, extension 3101, or email smbusinesslicense@san-marcos.net

FEES

Fee Name	Fee Amount	Fee Notes
Application Processing Fee	\$140	Non-refundable fee
Rush Application Processing Fee	\$150	Non-refundable fee
Fire Inspection	\$25	If applicable to your event
Event Fee	\$450	Non-refundable fee (waived for non-profits)
Health and Safety Permit	Varies	Fees vary based on the scope
Insurance Fee	Direct Costs	Fees vary based on the insurance requirements
Park Custodial Fee	Market rate	Fees vary
Park Shelter / Field Reservation	Varies	Fees vary by event
Supplemental Law Enforcement Services	Varies	Fees vary by event
Fire Standby – Personnel	\$68/hr	Non-refundable fee
Fire Standby – Ambulance	\$247/hr	Non-refundable fee
Fire Standby – Fire Engine	\$373/hr	Non-refundable fee
Event Deposit	Direct Cost Refundable	Event deposits may be required to cover potential damages and ensure compliance with city regulations depending on the specifics of the event

Deposits: Deposit amounts will be listed on the permit invoice. For park events, repair costs for field damage or policy violations will be reduced. For non-park events, a security deposit may be required based on location and attendance. Refunds will be processed within 15 business days; deductions may apply for damage or incidentals. The City may seek additional reimbursement if costs exceed the deposit.

EVENT SPECIFICS DETAILS & RESOURCES

Event Specifics	Details	Requirements	Resources
Amplified Sound	Any sound increased in volume using electronic devices such as microphones, speakers, amplifiers, or public address systems.	Follow all noise ordinances within the City of San Marcos Municipal Code.	City of San Marcos Municipal Code
Automobiles	Involvement of vehicles in event activities beyond basic travel to and from.	Maintain \$1,000,000 per accident combined single limit insurance for bodily injury and property damage. Cross-liability exclusions are prohibited. Defense costs in addition to coverage limits. No 'burning limits' coverages allowed.	Insurance Requirements
Bounce Houses/Soft Play Equipment	Inflatable structures designed for children's entertainment. Soft play equipment is only allowed at reservable shelters that allow an inflatable jump house.	May require an onsite inspection of anchorage. Permit required for events on public property.	Bounce House Information Parks & Recreation: (760) 744-9000
Canopy	A large canopy, typically greater than 700 square feet.	Obtain a Health & Safety Permit and fire inspection.	Health & Safety Permit: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3244 Fire Inspection: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3416
Carnival Rides	Mechanical rides designed for entertainment at events.	Adhere to all standard conditions of approval. Obtain a Health & Safety Permit and fire inspection.	Health & Safety Permit: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3244 Fire Inspection: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3416

Costumes and Props	Clothing and accessories used for character portrayal in entertainment. Props are objects used during a production.	May require discussion with Law Enforcement or San Marcos Fire Department regarding specific costumes or props.	San Marcos Sheriff's Department: (858) 868-3200 San Marcos Fire Department: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3400
Drone Filming	Use of unmanned aerial vehicles equipped with cameras for video and photography.	Provide proof of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) coverage listing specific aircraft. Minimum \$1,000,000 per occurrence ad \$2,000,000 aggregate coverage.	Drone Filming Guidelines
Fixed Wing Aircraft/Helicopter	Use of aircraft or helicopter in filming.	In addition to permit insurance, provide aviation insurance with a minimum of \$5,000,000 coverage per accident.	Aviation Insurance Requirements
Generators	Standalone power-generating devices not connected to the electrical grid.	Generator installation supplying receptacles not mounted on the generator requires a Health & Safety Permit.	Health & Safety Permit: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3244
Live Animals	Creatures actively involved or exhibited in events such as petting zoos, adoption events, or educational exhibits.	Ensure compliance with regulations for care and containment, including necessary permits or inspections.	City of San Marcos Municipal Code
Multiple Locations	Events taking place across multiple sites.	May require coverage per site and higher insurance limits.	Insurance Requirements
Pyrotechnics	Chemical reactions creating effects like fireworks displays.	Contact the San Marcos Fire Department to discuss all pyrotechnics.	San Marcos Fire Department: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3400
Sound Effects	Artificially created or recorded sounds for enhancing media production.	No specific requirements noted.	Film Permit Guidelines

Sports Field Use or Park Facilities	Use of outdoor areas for athletic activities or park amenities.	Contact a Special Event Coordinator to confirm availability before applying for an Event Permit.	Capacity List for Park Shelters Parks & Recreation: (760) 744-9000
Stunts	Planned actions by trained professionals to create dramatic or action-packed scenes.	No specific requirements noted.	San Marcos Sheriff's Department: (858) 868-3200 San Marcos Fire Department: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3400
Temporary Restrooms (Port-A-Potties)	Portable sanitation facilities for events lacking sufficient permanent restrooms.	Required for events with insufficient permanent facilities. Typically, one restroom per 150-200 guests; more if alcohol is served. Portable restrooms to be procured and coordinated by applicant.	Staff will inform the applicant if portable restrooms are required based on the scope of the event.
Tent	A large tent, typically greater than 400 square feet.	Obtain a Health & Safety Permit and fire inspection.	Health & Safety Permit: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3244 Fire Inspection: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3416
Vendors	<p>Entities providing goods or services at the event.</p> <p>Vendor types: Food Handlers: Provide prepared or raw food for consumption.</p> <p>Mobile Food Trucks: Sell food directly to consumers from a mobile vehicle.</p> <p>Retailers: Sells goods directly to consumers through physical stores, online platforms.</p>	Provide detailed information about all vendors, including food handlers, mobile food trucks, and informational vendors. Confirm business licenses for vendors in San Marcos.	Business License Search Business License Inquiries: (760) 744-1050 ext. 3101

	Informational Vendors: Provide information-based products or services.		
Emergency Response & Safety Plan	Plan for responding to emergencies during the event.	Highly recommended to have a detailed emergency response and safety plan. Required for certain large events.	
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) & Adequate Sanitation	Compliance with accessibility and sanitation requirements.	Ensure equal access to facilities and services, and adequate sanitation. Provide location of portable restrooms on event site plan. Additional facilities may be required based on event size.	ADA

Film Permit Guidelines

- **Notification:** All residents and merchants within a 200 feet radius of the film location must receive notice of filming dates, times, location address and production company contact at least 48 hours prior to the first film activity. It is most effective to notify affected residents and business owners in person or via flyer, unless a property is inaccessible.
- **Parking:** When parking production vehicles on a public street, residents and merchants impacted by such parking must receive notice at least 48 hours prior to the arrival of the vehicles. All those impacted should also be notified of the city/county's procedures for towing vehicles parked in areas where "no parking" signs have been posted
- **Clean up:** The permittee shall conduct operations in an orderly fashion with continuous attention to the storage of equipment not in use and the cleanup of trash and debris. The area used shall be cleaned of trash and debris upon completion of filming at the scene and restored to the original condition before leaving the site.
- **Public Works Department (Road and Streets):** If the applicant must park equipment, trucks, and/or cars in zones that will not permit it, temporary "No Parking" signs must be posted with approval of the local authority. The applicant must also obtain permission to lay and safely mat cable across sidewalks or from generator to service point.
- **Traffic Control:** For filming that would impair traffic flow, an applicant must use California Highway Patrol (CHP), County Sheriff or local law enforcement personnel and comply with all traffic control requirements deemed necessary.

Emergency Response & Safety Plan

It is highly recommended that you consider how to respond and communicate with volunteers, emergency responders and the event planning team in the case of an emergency. All events should have a detailed emergency response and safety plan which should include locations of emergency command, designated event officials, on-site medical equipment and trained staff, etc. This plan is generally not required to be submitted to the city but can be required for certain types of larger events.

Americans with Disabilities Act and Adequate Sanitation

It is the applicant's responsibility to comply with all City, County, State and Federal accessibility requirements, including the ADA. The ADA mandates equal access to facilities, services, and programs for persons with a disability. This may include providing a clear path of travel to and on sidewalks, maintaining designated ADA parking and accessibility to restrooms. Visit the City's ADA [General Information Page](#) for more information.

In addition to satisfying ADA requirements, it is expected that all events provide adequate sanitation and restroom access for all participants. Identification and location of portable restrooms is to be provided on the event site plan.

Staff will evaluate the anticipated needs of each event and applicant will be made aware if additional facilities are required. Typical rule for portable restrooms is one restroom per 150-200 guests, but additional restrooms may be required if serving alcohol. Portable restrooms are to be procured and coordinated at the applicant's expense.

Resources

Alcoholic Beverage Control License

Website: [Licensing | Alcoholic Beverage Control](#)
Contact Number: (916) 419-2500
Email: headquarters@abc.ca.gov

County Health Permit

Website: [Department of Environmental Health and Quality](#)
Contact Number: (800) 253-9933
Email: Ryan.Johnson@sdcounty.ca.gov

Health & Safety Permit

Website: [Building & Code Compliance | San Marcos, CA](#)
Contact Number: (760) 744-1050, extension 3244
Email: buildingpermits@san-marcos.net

Right-of-Way Permit

Website: [Welcome to Development Services | San Marcos, CA](#)
Contact Number: (760) 744-1050, extension 3214
Email: engineeringdivision@san-marcos.net.

San Marcos Sheriff's Station

Website: [San Marcos Station | Patrol Stations | San Diego County Sheriff](#)
Contact Number: (858) 868-3200

San Marcos Fire Department

Website: [Welcome to the San Marcos Fire Department | San Marcos, CA](#)
Contact Number: (760) 744-1050, extension 3400
Email: kkim@san-marcos.net (Ken Kim)

Special Event Coordinators

Website: [Special Event Permits | San Marcos, CA](#)
Contact Number: (760) 744-1050
Email: specialeventpermits@san-marcos.net