

Special events...to be or not to be?

By Carlene Brown

As the snow begins to melt and with the arrival of springtime, many members are experiencing a growing interest in holding "socially distant" events, such as car parades, drive-in theaters, block parties and many more. While many municipalities recognize the good intentions behind creating such events, according to the Healthy Washington phased reopening plan, these events are subject to limitations on group size and precautions taken to make a safer environment.

Throughout the year, the Risk Management Representatives receive a variety of questions from the membership surrounding special events. However, with the COVID-19 outbreak this past year, events that may have typically taken place in the past simply did not occur. With the changing of the season along with the Washington State's re-opening phases, citizens are beginning to inquire about hosting gatherings. In fact, this past month, we received a call from a member stating that a neighbor wanted to host a large birthday party that involved pony rides in the public right away.

While many citizens are eager to host or have public gatherings and activities including birthday parties in the public right away, there may be no guaranteed approval of event dates at this time as we continue to monitor the public health impacts and guidance for addressing COVID-19 in our state and regions. WCIA recommends that members make sure that the event adheres to the occupancy and operation requirements outlined for their region's Healthy Washington phased reopening plan.

With uncertainty of whether or not a planned event can take place at the time of the requested date(s), WCIA has sample disclaimer language that can be used for those circumstances where a member is inclined to issue a permit despite the constant changes with Washington's reopening plan. The disclaimer language can be found in the [WCIA COVID-19 Tool Kit](#) and added to the permit, or it can be used as a standalone document. See below for the sample disclaimer. It is recommended that members consult with their agency attorney regarding use of disclaimer language.

For additional information on what type of activities normally require a Special Event Permit, please consult the [WCIA Special Event Tool Kit](#). If you are planning on having or allowing special events and you have questions, please contact your WCIA Risk Management Representative.

SAMPLE

[with optional language regarding cancellation fees]

DISCLAIMER/CONDITION FOR SPECIAL EVENT PERMITS DURING PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS RESULTING FROM COVID-19

The issuance or granting of this permit shall not be construed to be a permit for, or approval of, any violation of any ordinance or order of the **[insert: City/Town]**, of any state or federal law, or of any order, proclamation, guidance advice or decision of a local health officer or the Governor of this State. To the extent the issuance or granting of this permit is interpreted to allow activity during any period of time when such activity is prohibited or restricted by any state or federal law, or order, proclamation, guidance advice or decision of a local health officer or the Governor of this State, this permit shall not authorize such activity and shall not be valid. The **[insert: City/Town]** is authorized to suspend or revoke this permit if it is determined to be issued in error or on the basis of incorrect, inaccurate or incomplete information, or in violation of any **[insert: City/Town]** ordinance, regulation or order, state or federal law, or any order, proclamation, guidance or decision of a local health officer or the Governor in existence on the date the event is scheduled to take place.

[optional language to insert re cancellation fees]:

The **[insert: City/Town]** is not responsible for any loss of money, resources or damages incurred by the permit requestor or vendors as a result of suspension or cancellation of this permit based on requirements of any **[insert: City/Town]** ordinance, regulation or order, state or federal law, or any order, proclamation, guidance or decision of a local health officer or the Governor in existence on the date the event is scheduled to take place.

I have read the above disclaimer/condition for issuance of this special event permit, I understand it, and I agree to the disclaimer/condition as stated.

PRINTED NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE