



Special Event Guidelines Alcohol Management

It is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to consume alcoholic beverages in the State of California. As the Host Organization or authorized representative listed on the Citywide Special Event Permit Application you and/or your organization are legally liable for any consumption and/or possession of alcohol by a minor.

Applying for a Permit

If you propose to sell or furnish alcoholic beverages at your event, you will be required to obtain a permit from the California State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) in addition to your Citywide Special Event Permit.

The City of San Diego Police Department and State ABC representatives will review your event plans and alcohol management strategies before your license is approved. If the proposed event will take place on public park land; within a city-owned facility; or other city-managed property, you will also be required to provide a letter of authorization to serve alcohol from an authorized representative of the managing city department. Both the Police Department and managing city department may place restrictions on the way in which alcohol is managed at your proposed event.

More information is available at www.abc.ca.gov or the local ABC office can be contacted at 619.525-4064.

Beer Gardens

If your event is open to the public or is a private event in a venue location where alcohol consumption is prohibited except with a special event permit, the City of San Diego prohibits



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the consumption of alcohol in the event venue outside of a controlled space, commonly referred to as a “beer garden”.

A beer garden is required to separate guests of a legal drinking age from those who are not. All beer gardens must be constructed with material or in a manner that prevents beverages from being passed through to patrons outside the controlled space.

A beer garden can be constructed using several different methods including:

- One, six-foot (6') free standing chain link fence, clear plastic sheeting, or other material that will easily allow the interior to be visible from the outside. Posters, banners, and other material shall not block more than 20% of the visibility.
- Two, four-foot (4') free standing fences or other barriers placed six feet (6') apart.
- Tent structures may be used for beer gardens when appropriate security measures are employed.
- All entrances and exits must be at least four feet wide and free of any obstructions.
- The Fire Marshal requires entrances and exits to be spaced apart from each other based on the following formula:
 - Corner to Corner Diagonal Distance \div 2 = Distance between Exits
 - ✓ Example: a 40' x 40' square has a diagonal measurement of 56 feet (56').
 - ✓ $56' \div 2' = 28'$.
 - ✓ Therefore, the exits must be placed at least 28 feet (28') apart from each other.
- The Fire Marshal will establish a maximum occupancy for your beer garden based on the proposed square footage, usage and furnishings of the beer garden.



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Pre-Calculated Beer Garden Examples

As part of your event plans, you must depict the size and configuration of any proposed beer gardens on your site plan or route map. Some events use more than one beer garden within their defined venue area. Large-scale or unique events may use non-standard sizes. The following information is presented to help you develop your beer garden plans and is based on the standard sizes used at most events.

Pre-Calculated Beer Garden Examples

Beer Garden	Small	Medium	Large	Extra Large
Square Footage	600	800	1,200	1,600
Dimensions	20'w x 30'l	20'w x 40' l	30'w x 40' l	40'w x 40' l
Required Entrances/Exits with Furniture	1—Distance between entrances at least 18'	2—Distance between entrances at least 22'	2—Distance between entrances at least 25'	2—Distance between entrances at least 28'
Required Entrances/Exits Without Furniture	2—Distance between entrances at least 18'	2—Distance between entrances at least 22'	2—Distance between entrances at least 25'	2—Distance between entrances at least 28'
Maximum Occupancy With Furniture*	40	53	80	106
Maximum Occupancy Without furniture*	85	114	171	228
Access to guests under 21 years old	No	No	No	No
Private Security	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Occupancy and entrance/exit requirements based on maximum beer garden size for each category using calculations established in the California Fire Code. Furniture refers to the use of belly bars, chairs/tables, and serving equipment. Use of larger furniture may reduce occupancy levels.