



NYC Parks

To: Borough Commissioners, Recreation Chiefs, Borough and Citywide Special Event Permit Offices

From: Margaret Nelson, Deputy Commissioner for Public Programs and Community Engagement, Emily Chase, Assistant Commissioner for Public Programs, and David Cerron, Assistant Commissioner for Business Development and Special Events

Re: Standardization of NYC Parks Special Events Policies

Date: August 7, 2025

With the Commissioner's approval, we have finalized four policies as an update to the standardization of practices for special events. The standardized policies are:

- Usage of Inflatables
- Mobile Stages ("Wenger Wagons")
- Events at NYC Parks Beach and Pools - Open Water
- Usage of Open Flame

Please see attached for the final versions of each policy.

Policies for Open Water and Open Flame events are in effect and remain unchanged. The updated policies for Inflatables and Mobile Stages/Wenger Wagons will go into effect for 2026 events.



Special Events: Usage of Inflatables

This document outlines the permitting requirements for events in locations under NYC Parks' jurisdiction that are seeking permission to incorporate an inflatable element.

- Inflatables will be approved only for NYC Parks managed events, events held by elected officials, and events managed by other City agencies.
- Inflatables will be authorized ONLY for events of 500 people or more AND are also NYC Parks managed events, events held by elected officials, and events managed by other City agencies.
- Inflatables will be considered if the permitted space is determined by the Park Manager to be large enough to accommodate inflatables while allowing for adequate circulation.
- Non-recreational inflatables used only for decorative purposes are permitted, but may be subject to site fees as outlined in City Rules as part of the NYC Parks Concession Fee Schedule ([§2-10 Special Event Concessions : NYC Parks](#)).
- The following parameters will apply for events utilizing inflatables:
 - Inflatables must be powered by generator provided by the producer/permit holder (no water or electrical connections will be provided by NYC Parks).
 - Inflatables that require water to run, i.e. water slides, are not permitted.
 - All inflatables must not exceed a footprint of 20' x 40'. Bounce Houses should not exceed 20' x 20'. For larger setups, no individual piece should be larger than 20' x 40'.
 - Each event may incorporate no more than four inflatables.
 - Inflatables must be erected on surfaces deemed acceptable by the Park Manager that will not cause damage to the parkland. Safe anchors include sandbags, weights, and water ballasts. Staking into the ground is not permitted unless for movie screens approved by NYC Parks.
 - The request to incorporate inflatables must be indicated on the permit application (submitted at least 21 days in advance). Last minute requests will not be considered.
 - Applicant must provide Commercial General Liability Insurance from the vendor, in the amount of at least Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence, with the City of New York named as additional insured.
 - Applicant must provide a minimum security bond in the amount of \$500.
 - Applicant must obtain and provide to NYC Parks a copy of the most recent inspection certificates from DOB for each inflatable.
 - The event applicant must provide continuous, adequate supervision of the inflatable throughout the event.



Special Events: Mobile Stages (“Wenger Wagons”)

This document outlines the permitting procedures and requirements for events in locations under NYC Parks’ jurisdiction that are seeking permission to use a Mobile Stage, or “Wenger Wagon” belonging to Parks.

- It is not within Parks’ mission or its role to provide event infrastructure when permitting special events. The use of Mobile Stages will be permitted only for events sponsored (i.e. applicant in CEMS) and organized by elected officials and sister City agencies. Partner groups, including those with a license agreement, must host an event in partnership with an elected official or City agency in order to use a mobile stage and the permit will be issued to the elected official or City agency.
- The units will be utilized only on property under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks, or in streets directly adjacent, with the proper permits and approvals. The Borough Operations office will indicate whether the desired location is operationally feasible and only provide the unit if it is feasible.
- Given limited budget and staffing available, event organizers will be responsible for covering the costs for the overtime staff costs and maintenance incurred by the transport and/or use of the mobile stage. **Mobile Stages will not be delivered on the day of the event without prior payment.**
 - The APSW overtime rate is \$42.25/hour. The CPW rate is \$32.28/hour. An 8-hour shift for the two employees will total \$596 and associated maintenance for the wagons and toter (which transports the wagon) totals \$125. The total cost is \$721. These rates are subject to CBA increases.
- All permit applications which include a Mobile Stage request will require approval from the First Deputy Commissioner or their designee.
 - The office of the approving Deputy Commissioner must approve any use of a Mobile Stage in CEMS and a designated member of their team will be given ability to do so. **Mobile Stages will not be delivered on the day of the event without such approval.**
 - If there is a generator on the Mobile Stage, it should be used only to power the ADA lift and fluorescent light; the light is not appropriate to be used for stage lighting. The generator should not be used to power the event.
- Given limited availability, staffing restrictions and wear and tear impacts, Parks will not supply event equipment such as tables, chairs, tents, sound systems, and related materials for event producers; these materials are exclusively to be used by Parks for Parks-produced events.
- For 2027 and beyond, Parks should develop a plan for determining the appropriate number of Mobile Stages to have in its inventory and if other vehicle types can provide more utility to Parks.



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Those external, non-City or Elected Official entities who held events with use of a mobile stage in 2023-24 include:

Bronx:

- Chabad of Park Slope
- East Flatbush Village Inc.
- New York Botanical Garden

Brooklyn:

- African American Day Parade, Inc.
- West Indian American Day Carnival Association
- Citizens for a Better Community
- Juneteenth NYC, Inc.

Manhattan

- Central Park Conservancy
- Dominican USA Chamber of Commerce
- Harlem Week, Inc
- Randalls Island Park Alliance
- Riverside Park Conservancy
- Tunnel to Towers Foundation
- General Pulaski Parade Committee Inc.
- The Sikh Cultural Society
- United War Veterans Council & UWVC Foundation

Queens:

- Friends of Cunningham Park
- Friends of Francis Lewis Park
- East Elmhurst Corona Civic Assoc.
- Jewish Institute of Queens
- Juniper Park Civic Assoc.
- Socrates Sculpture Park



Special Events: Events at NYC Parks Beach and Pools - Open Water

This document outlines the standard operating procedures for events at beaches and pools under NYC Parks' jurisdiction. These guidelines help ensure safety and compliance at NYC Parks beaches and pools in accordance with State & City policies. The following guidelines must be adhered to by any event that will have a water-based activity as part of the event, such as triathlons and triathlon training, swim events, polar plunges, baptisms, film shoots, and other special events at beaches and pools supervised by lifeguards.

Site / Course / Route Map and Schedule:

- A detailed site / course / route map and a schedule of all activities that require participants to enter the water must be provided to ensure proper planning and coordination.

Lifeguard Requirements:

- Special Event applicants must secure active NYC Parks lifeguards as primary lifeguards through the Borough & Citywide Special Event Permitting Offices and Division of Special Programs. Applicants will be responsible for any overtime cost related to such lifeguards.

Safety Plan:

- Applicants must submit a comprehensive safety plan for approval. This plan must address all potential risks and emergency procedures.

Additional Emergency Resources:

- Depending on the event's scale and nature, applicants may be required to arrange additional emergency resources as determined by Parks. This could include EMS, FDNY, NYPD, and other relevant services. Additional external safety personnel can support the event as a secondary resource.

Inclement Weather Plan:

- An inclement weather plan must be developed and submitted. This plan should outline how the event would be managed, if applicable, in adverse weather conditions.

Coast Guard Permit:

- Events at beaches may require a permit from the U.S. Coast Guard. Applicants are responsible for securing the necessary permits. Please contact the U.S. Coast Guard.

Insurance and Security Bond:

- Applicants are responsible for obtaining appropriate insurance coverage and a security bond. This ensures protection against potential liabilities and covers for any necessary cost related to the event.

Please reach out to the Citywide or Borough Special Events Coordinator assigned to your Special Event with any questions or concerns.



Special Events: Usage of Open Flame

This document outlines the permitting requirements for events in locations under NYC Parks' jurisdiction that are seeking permission to use open flames. These guidelines help ensure safety and compliance at NYC Parks in accordance with State & City Policies. The following guidelines must be adhered to by any event that will have an open-flame activity as part of the event. Please ensure you are familiar with the insurance requirements for the permit application, as they must be met before approval.

Drought

In the event of a drought warning, NYC Parks reserves the right to prohibit all open-flame activities within parkland.

Barbecuing

Any barbecue event that involves more than 20 people requires a special event permit. In addition, barbecuing is only allowed in designated areas.

NYC Parks rules also prohibit:

- Littering and dumping of debris
- Propane
- Barbecuing in non-authorized areas
- Grills on top of picnic tables
- Sternos and chafing dishes
- Barbecuing next to trees, tree roots, or buildings. Please keep ten feet or more away from any structures.
- Any type of open, ground, or campfire. Please barbecue at least three feet off the ground.
- Barbecuing by anyone 18 years or younger

All coal and matches must be disposed of in designated receptacles. Patrons are not permitted to place coal and matches and other similarly flammable items in a regular litter barrel. Patrons are also required to use water to extinguish hot coals. Patrons are reminded that improperly dumped coals or matches can do major damage to our parks.

Holiday Lighting and Torches

All special events that include a holiday lighting display with open flame or torch component including, but not limited to menorahs and other torches, must include a letter of approval by the NYC Fire Department, (FDNY).

Permit holders must comply with all FDNY requirements and conditions listed in the letter of approval, which shall contain the following conditions:

- Any open flame must be kept at least 10 feet from any combustible materials and placed in an approved location.
- No kerosene or other fuel may be stored at any park location.
- An FDNY-approved fire extinguisher must be on site during the open flame event and be easily accessible.
- Menorahs with open flames or torches must be under 10 feet in height and securely set up.
- Permit holders must provide appropriate insurance listing the City of New York and its officials as additionally insured.



Fireworks

All consumer fireworks, including sparklers, are illegal to use, buy, sell, or transport within New York City.

Fireworks Displays on Parkland

Fireworks displays may be held on parkland if the applicant:

- Hires a certified fireworks operator.
- Obtains all required City permits and approvals.

However, a fireworks display may be denied if:

- The location is unsuitable, as determined by Parks, due to landscaping, plants, or environmental risks.
- It would unreasonably interfere with public enjoyment of the park, as determined by Parks.

Permit Application and Approval

The Fire Department may deny a fireworks permit if:

- The display cannot be conducted safely.
- The location, timing, or other scheduled events make monitoring difficult.
- The application is incomplete, or the sponsor/fireworks contractor does not cooperate.

Pyrotechnic Operator Requirements

A certified pyrotechnic operator must oversee all displays, ensuring:

- Safe handling, setup, and launch of fireworks.
- Post-display site safety.
- Compliance with all laws and permit conditions.

A certified pyrotechnic assistant may help but can only discharge fireworks under the direct supervision of the operator.

Responsibilities of the Fireworks Contractor

The fireworks contractor must:

- Submit the permit application and display plan.
- Obtain all required permits from agencies such as the U.S. Coast Guard, NYC Parks Department, and Federal Aviation Administration.
- Ensure compliance with laws on explosive transportation.
- Provide fire protection, safety measures, and have qualified staff onsite.
- Follow all instructions from Fire Department representatives.
- Maintain safe viewing areas and crowd control with the event sponsor.
- Liability and casualty insurance as required.
- Inspect the display site 24–48 hours before the event for safety hazards and report any issues.
- Leave the site in a clean and safe condition after the display, as determined by the Park Manager or Parks Special Events staff.

Application Process



NYC Parks

- Permit applications must be submitted to the Fire Department at least 30 days before the display date and submitted to NYC Parks 21 days before the event date.
- Applications must be in the department's specified format and signed by both the sponsor and fireworks contractor.
- The Fire Department will only approve applications if it determines the event can be conducted safely.
- Applications must include all required details and documents as specified by the commissioner.



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- The units will be utilized only on property under the jurisdiction of NYC Parks, or in streets directly adjacent, with the proper permits and approvals. The Borough Operations office will indicate whether the desired location is operationally feasible and only provide the unit if it is feasible.
- Given limited budget and staffing available, event organizers will be responsible for covering the costs for the overtime staff costs and maintenance incurred by the transport and/or use of the mobile stage. **Mobile Stages will not be delivered on the day of the event without prior payment.**
 - The APSW overtime rate is \$42.25/hour. The CPW rate is \$32.28/hour. An 8-hour shift for the two employees will total \$596 and associated maintenance for the wagons and toter (which transports the wagon) totals \$125. The total cost is \$721. These rates are subject to CBA increases.
- All permit applications which include a Mobile Stage request will require approval from the First Deputy Commissioner or their designee.
 - The office of the approving Deputy Commissioner must approve any use of a Mobile Stage in CEMS and a designated member of their team will be given ability to do so. **Mobile Stages will not be delivered on the day of the event without such approval.**
 - If there is a generator on the Mobile Stage, it should be used only to power the ADA lift and fluorescent light; the light is not appropriate to be used for stage lighting. The generator should not be used to power the event.
- Given limited availability, staffing restrictions and wear and tear impacts, Parks will not supply event equipment such as tables, chairs, tents, sound systems, and related materials for event producers; these materials are exclusively to be used by Parks for Parks-produced events.
- For 2027 and beyond, Parks should develop a plan for determining the appropriate number of Mobile Stages to have in its inventory and if other vehicle types can provide more utility to Parks.

From: Cerron, David (Parks)
Sent: Thursday, August 7, 2025 1:52 PM
To: Coates, Farrell (Parks); Guest, Fannie (PARKS); Munoz-Torres, Silvia (Parks); Davis, Christopher (Parks); Young, Michelle (Parks); Harmon, Neil (Parks); Jensen, Nicole (Parks); Fernandez, Sandra (Parks); Pepe, Claudia (Parks); Melissas, Nancy (Parks); Conyers, Ken (Parks); Hill, Eunice (Parks); Timberlake, Lawrence (Parks); Salerno, David (Parks); Halpin, Michael (Parks); Ehrlich, Stephanie (Parks); Shimamura, Tricia (Parks); Maher, Martin (Parks); Homsey, Joseph (Parks); Aponte, Jessenia (Parks); Langsam, Jackie (Parks)
Cc: Conforti, Joe (Parks); Mrozinski, Mallory (Parks); Lopez, Enrique (Parks); Mangroo, Stacey (Parks); Chase, Emily (Parks); Olivieri, Alessandro (Parks); Nelson, Margaret (Parks); Drury, Matt (Parks); Pedtke, Ann (PARKS); McTernan, Anne (PARKS); Ayala, Hugo (Parks); Tellason, Roy (Parks); Focht, Mark (Parks); Milza, Donna (Parks); Saha, Prema (Parks); Wigfall, DeVoray (Parks); Nunda, Stacey (Parks); Gadime, Taner (Parks); Urofsky, Bea (Parks); Hoppa, Jennifer (Parks)
Subject: Updated Special Event Policies
Attachments: Memo to BC and Chiefs - standardized SE policies.pdf

Dear BCs, Chiefs and Directors,

As you know, our teams have been working on standardizing policies regarding special event permits. We have finalized policies around use of inflatables, Parks' Mobile Stages ("Wenger Wagons"), Open Water, and Open Flame. Attached is a memo along with final versions of the four policies. Please work with your teams to inform stakeholders of our upcoming changes and feel free to use the suggested language below along with some talking points to guide a conversation with stakeholders should they call your office with questions.

Thank you,
David

FOR WENGER WAGONS:

Dear Event Applicant,

You are receiving this email because you have previously applied for and received a special event permit that included the use of a Parks' mobile stage ("Wenger Wagons") or other event equipment such as tables and chairs. We want you to be aware that starting on January 1, 2026, NYC Parks will no longer be able to provide this equipment for special events. If you have an event that requires this equipment, you may choose to seek other options through commercial vendors. As a reminder, the location and set up of mobile stages and other event equipment is subject to the review and approval of NYC Parks.

If you have any questions, please call my office at (xxx) xxx-xxx.

Thank you,

Borough Commissioner Name Here

TALKING POINTS:

Why has the policy changed?

NYC Parks is focused on caring for and maintaining our Parks, playgrounds, and green spaces. We also provide programming opportunities for active and passive recreation, and in those cases we will utilize our mobile stages. This is part of our mission. However, renting out event equipment is not within our mission and it takes away limited staffing resources that would otherwise be cleaning, caring for, and programming our Parks.

Will Parks let anyone use a Wenger Wagon?

Yes. City agencies and elected officials may still be permitted to use Wenger Wagons if they have applied for and received a special event permit. However, due to limited availability, staffing restrictions, and "wear and tear" impacts, Parks will not supply other event equipment (tables, chairs, tents, etc.).

Will City agencies and elected officials have to pay for the Wenger Wagons?

Yes. They will have to pay the OT rate for 1 APSW and 1 CPW for a total time of 8 hours per staff person totaling \$596. Additionally, they will have to pay for the associated maintenance for the Wagons and the Totter (which transports the Wagon) at \$125. The total cost is \$721. These rates are subject to CBA increases.

FOR INFLATABLES:

Dear Event Applicant,

You are receiving this email because you have previously applied for and received a special event permit that included the use of a recreational inflatable element. We want you to be aware that starting on January 1, 2026, inflatables will only be approved for NYC Parks-managed events, events held by elected officials, events held by other City agencies, and events that are for 500 people or more. Inflatables that require water are not permitted.

If you have any questions, please call my office at (xxx) xxx-xxx.

Thank you,

Borough Commissioner/Recreation Chief Name Here

TALKING POINTS:

Why has the policy changed?

NYC Parks is focused on cleaning, caring for, and safely programming our parks, playgrounds, and green spaces. Due to maintenance (including "wear and tear" impacts), safety, and liability concerns, we are no longer allowing inflatables for most permitted special events.

Will Parks allow any inflatables?

Allowable inflatables are subject to the parameters outlined in the attached policy memo including size and total number of inflatable features.

Reminder on other policy updates (not necessary to send to permit applicants):

- Water-based events such as triathlons and triathlon training, swim events, polar plunges, baptisms, film shoots, and other special events at beaches and pools **must be supervised by NYC Parks lifeguards**. Reach out to Chief Bonnie Williams' office to ensure lifeguards are assigned and OT is reimbursed.
- Events with open flame component must obtain written approval from FDNY and submit appropriate insurance listing the City of New York and its officials as additionally insured.

David Cerron (he / him / his)

Assistant Commissioner, Business Development and Special Events
NYC Parks

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