Frequently Asked Questions

I am not sure I need a Special Event Permit. It is planned to be a small gathering. Must I fill out the application and pay a fee?
The City of Mercer Island offers a choice of a “Small Special Event Application” for smaller events and a “Large Special Event Application/ Notice of Intent” for large events. A special event application fee of $20 is charged for both applications. Use the following criteria to determine which event application you will need or contact the scheduling office at 206-275-7873 for assistance.

Small Special Event Application:
- Weddings in the parks.
- Reserving an area that is not part of our established rental facilities (including the Amphitheater and Calkins Point at Luther Burbank Park and Mercerdale Park).
- Any event with more than 125 people, but less than 200 people (including picnic rentals).
- Picnic rentals that plan to have inflatable toys such as bounce houses, dunk tanks, or other special activities.
- Filming in the parks with a small crew (5 people or less), without a closed set.
- Photo shoots with a small crew (5 people or less), without a closed set.
- Any event for less than 200 people using amplified sound or specialized equipment.

Large Special Event Application/ Notice of Intent:
- Events expecting more than 200 people.
- Events that will be charging an entry fee, using sponsors or will have booths rented.
- For events held on public streets, sidewalks, walkways, or other areas that interfere with regular vehicular or pedestrian traffic or requires the use of City services.
- Filming or photo shoots that require closed sets or have a crew of more than 5 people.

Why do I need to apply for a Special Event?
The Permit process gives the City a chance to review the Special Event Request to determine specific City services that may be needed to support the special event. Special Event Applications are reviewed by the Special Events Committee which is compromised of key City personnel who decide if their department’s services are needed and what extra conditions might be required by the applicant to ensure a successful event.

What should I expect to pay for my Special Event Permit?
Fees for Special Events will vary depending upon the size, type, length of the event and impact the event is expected to have. A fee schedule is included in the application packet to be used as guideline but final costs are determined by the Special Events Committee. Extra fees/permits (such as Right of Way permits, electrical fees, water hook-up fees etc.) may also apply. The City may require the use of Fire, Police, Emergency Medical Personnel, etc. You will know of these requirements and fees associated with them prior to entering into a contract for your event.

When do I pay for my Special Event?
The $20.00 non-refundable application fee must accompany all Special Event Applications. No other fees are collected until the Special Events Committee has determined the final cost of the event. The event must be paid in full fourteen (14) days prior to the event. If the event approval is given less than thirty (30) days before the event, payment must be paid in full upon approval.
What if I want to serve alcohol at my event?
Alcoholic beverages are prohibited within the parks. Pursuant to Mercer Island Criminal Code 9.30.200, bringing, possessing or consuming alcoholic beverages within a City park is a misdemeanor. No waivers will be granted to allow alcohol at an event being held in a City park.

What if I cancel my event? Can I get a refund?
The City of Mercer Island will refund your fee for any reason if you are not able to fulfill your agreement. You must make the request in writing. The Special Event Application fee is non-refundable. For the event fees you will receive the following percentage of the fee paid:

100% If an agency of the City of Mercer Island cancels the event.
90% If you cancel no later than 14 business days before the event.
80% If you cancel less than 14 business days before the event.
0% If you cancel less than 24 hours before the event.

50% SAME DAY CANCELLATION: If by chance your event is cancelled at the time of the event due to inclement weather, natural catastrophe, or dangerous conditions to participants, you will receive a reduced refund. In most cases, in order to cover cost to the City, this refund will be 50% of the fee paid.

How do I obtain a Special Event Permit?
Special Event Applications can be found on our website at www.miparks.net or obtained through the scheduling office at 206-275-7873. Submit this application and any additional information with the $20.00 application fee to the scheduling office at 2040 84th Ave. SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040. Your event will be reviewed by the Special Events Committee and either denied, approved as-is, or approved with special conditions to be met, within 30 days of receipt. You will be contacted by the scheduler once the decision has been made.

What are the reasons for denying a permit?
The following are examples of why your request for a Special Event permit may be denied:
- The event is expected to cause public safety problems.
- It was determined the event did not meet required conditions such as traffic control.
- Already scheduled events/activities, scheduled maintenance, etc. has been found to conflict with the request.
- City services required of Fire and Police would prevent reasonable response to emergency situations elsewhere in the City.
- Not enough time was given in order for the City to schedule the resources need to accommodate the request.
- The impact to neighbors is considered to be too significant.

How would I know if I needed a “Right of Way” Permit?
Right of Way Permits (R.O.W. Permits) are required for events held on public streets, sidewalks, walkways, certain public areas such as City sculpture gardens, or other areas that interfere with regular vehicular or pedestrian traffic. Examples of events requiring R.O.W permits would be triathlons, parades, walk-a-thons, sidewalks vendors, etc. R.O.W permit applications can be obtained at City Hall or on the City of Mercer Island Website: http://www.mercergov.org/files/PERMITrow-fillin.pdf
You may also obtain sample “traffic plans”, that are typically required to accompany the application, by visiting: http://www.mercergov.org/files/TrafficControlBarricades.pdf
R.O.W permits for most special events fall under the “miscellaneous” category.