



ICC NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
November 04, 2020
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New guidelines now available for businesses winterizing outdoor spaces

With the cold season approaching, businesses need to remember, safety-first, when creating outdoor spaces

Washington, D.C. – As the world continues to navigate pandemic restrictions, many businesses have relied on outdoor seating spaces to continuing serving their communities throughout COVID-19. As a result of the nuanced and regulated nature of adding outdoor seating, the International Code Council has published considerations and guidelines for business owners and designers leveraging this strategy.

Similar to the structures converted to [temporary healthcare](#) facilities at the onset of the pandemic, the new outdoor seating spaces must comply with building codes and safety standards. The guidelines document provides considerations for business owners and designers when working with local code officials and their Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). Key takeaways from the document include:

- **Obtain an approved permit:** Businesses looking to setup outdoor seating spaces will likely need to receive pre-approval in the form of a permit from either a state or local building department, as well as factor in any lead or wait time to receive approvals.
- **Determine if the space is temporary or permanent:** For structures that might remain in place for more than 180 days' time, owners, agents, and managers may be required to ensure that the structure complies with more in-depth provisions of the codes.
- **Ensure proper location:** Although the most obvious location choice for an outdoor seating space is in front of one's own storefront, this may not always be approved by local Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) due to safety reasons. Therefore, owners need to be able to plan for the proper location.
- **Ensure fire safety:** When constructing a designated outdoor dining space, the combustibility rating of the materials should always be evaluated and approved for the intended use by both building and fire code regulators.
- **Ensure adequate plumbing systems are available:** Keep in mind travel distances to toilet facilities when considering locations for outdoor seating and entertainment areas.
- **Maintain accessible routes and ensure other required accessible features are provided.** These features are extremely important and must be provided to serve any and all potential visitors, guest and staff at any time.

- **Ensure maximum safety when considering heating systems.** If heating capability is a consideration, always verify the appropriate system to serve the intended application as outlined in the guidance document.

“Throughout the pandemic, outdoor spaces have played a large role in sustaining our economy, especially as many businesses have had to reduce capacity for their indoor locations, and simply because the weather is turning colder does not mean this should stop,” said Stephen Jones, Senior Regional Manager, Government Relations, International Code Council. “However, structures need to continue to be safe and structurally sound, which is where this guide comes into play.”

For the full guide, “Considerations for Converting Outdoor Spaces into Temporary Seating Spaces,” click [here](#). This guide, along with other relevant tools and resources, can be found in the Code Council’s [Coronavirus Response Center](#). Acting as an aggregate information hub, the Coronavirus Response Center ensures building safety professionals are properly equipped with the necessary tools and resources to safely and smartly navigate the pandemic.

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About the International Code Council

The [International Code Council](#) is the leading global source of model codes and standards and building safety solutions. Code Council codes, standards and solutions are used to ensure safe, affordable and sustainable communities and buildings worldwide.