

GARAGE SALES

Do You Need a Permit?

In many areas, all you need to do to have a garage sale is put up some signs, take out an ad in your local paper and get ready to make some money. But in others, you may require a permit and to meet certain regulations. Check your local ordinances and follow these tips to make sure your sale is legal.

NUMBER OF DAYS

An important factor in whether or not you need a permit for a sale is the number of days you intend to hold it. Some municipalities require a permit for a sale lasting more than one day, while others require permits for any sale at all. Collier County, Florida, for example, requires a permit for a one- or two-day sale, but doesn't allow sales to last more than two days.

The city of Chicago regulates the number of days, it says, "to guard against seemingly perpetual yard sales that



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actually were serving as unlicensed retail operations in residential neighborhoods."

PARKING AND TRAFFIC

Another reason cities and counties may require a permit is to regulate parking and traffic. Many ordinances contain language that requests sellers do their best to provide adequate parking that doesn't impede traffic or impinge on their neighbors' property.

The city of Franklin, Tennessee, says that sellers must make sure traffic can pass normally and that park-

ing complies with applicable laws and ordinances. The city of Pasadena, California, says that a sale may not cause a "detrimental effect in a neighborhood's residential quality."

For large, multifamily or neighborhood sales, some cities suggest hiring law enforcement to handle both traffic and security.

SIGNAGE

Many ordinances also regulate signage. Leftover garage sale signage turns into litter quickly, and some signs can block drivers' vision. The city

of San Antonio, Texas, allows three signs per sale, one at the location of the sale and two others off the premises. Each sign must be smaller than 6 square feet and must display the permit as well. In Dallas, signs can't be placed in a right-of-way, median or on private property without permission. (This is pretty common and also good common sense.) Pueblo, Colorado, doesn't allow any signage at all, and some other cities, such as Pasadena, California, only allow signs on site. The city of Norman, Oklahoma,

issues you one sign with your permit, and that is the only sign you may use.

Make sure to remove all signs after your sale. Not only might it be the law, it's also being a good neighbor.

TYPES OF GOODS FOR SALE

Ordinances may also target the types of goods for sale. Many municipalities have separate rules and regulations regarding the sale of animals, for instance, and may not allow you to sell animals as part of your garage sale. Fort Smith, Arkansas, says that garage sales must only feature merchandise that is the "personal property owned by such person, that such property was not purchased for the purpose of resale."

FINES AND FEES

Some municipalities charge a nominal fee for the permit, mainly to cover the cost of processing it. However, several ordinances offered to waive the fee for age or for nonprofit or church sales. The fines for violating garage sale permit laws are much more steep. Running afoul of the law in Lewiston, Maine, will cost you \$1,000 for not obtaining a proper permit. The permit itself is \$10. In Gulfport, Florida, the fine can run up to \$500 or 60 days in jail.

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SELLER'S TIP

Follow the Rules

Read all local ordinances carefully and make sure to comply with them. Also go above and beyond when common sense calls for it, like removing any signage properly and cleaning up trash from the sale.

AD SPACE