

GARAGE SALES

Local Regulations and Your Sale

Some cities and towns require garage sale permits and, with COVID-19, even more are capping the number of people that can gather and instituting other rules to control crowds.

Here's what you need to know to keep from running afoul of the law and having fines eat up your profits.

GET A PERMIT

Some towns and cities require a permit before you can hold a garage or yard sale. Factors that figure in to whether you need a permit or not are the number of days you plan to hold the sale, the types of good for sale and the parking and traffic situation at your home and in your neighborhood.

The city of Chicago, for instance, regulates sales by the number to prevent yard sales from turning into unlicensed permanent retail operations. Collier County, Florida, doesn't allow sales to last more than two days. And Pasadena, California, says that a sale may not cause a detrimental effect in a neighborhood's residential quality.



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PANDEMIC SALES

Many cities and towns also have regulations on the number of people that can congregate in an outside space and have mask and other ordinances in effect. The penalties for breaking these laws can be steep. If you decide to hold a

sale, regulate the number of people present at any time, make sure buyers are social distancing and wear your face coverings if the law demands it.

SIGNAGE

Municipalities may also

regulate the signage you can put out for your sale. Some authorities regard unattended signage as litter and, because you conveniently provided your address, they know just where to go to write your ticket. San Antonio, Texas, allows three

signs per sale, one at the location of the sale and two others off the premises. The city also regulates the size of garage sale signage (smaller than 6 square feet). In Dallas, signs can't be put on a right of way or on private property without permission. Some cities, like Norman, Oklahoma, issue the only permissible signs with your permit.

SALE ITEMS

What you have for sale may also trigger a permit. The sale of live animals is tightly regulated by many state and local authorities, so it's best not to put that litter of puppies out with your garage sale.

Firearms are also governed by strict laws, even weapons primarily for hunting. Make sure you follow all of those rules carefully to prevent large fines or even worse.

WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP

If you have any questions or concerns about your sale, your best bet is to start with City Hall. They can direct you to the department responsible for sales and issuing permits, if any are required. And use common sense. Even if it's not the law, it's good manners to pick up your garage sale signs after your sale is over and to direct traffic so that it doesn't block your neighbors' driveways.

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BUYER'S TIP

Report Illegal Goods

If you suspect a sale might be illegal or that the seller is offering goods for sale that they shouldn't be, the best thing to do is leave and report the sale to the proper authorities. If the deals are too good to be true, the sale might not be on the up and up.

AD SPACE