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OPERATIONS

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Permitting process to be streamlined

Bret Thorn | Oct 15, 2020

New York City on Wednesday announced the rules for restaurants to heat the outdoor dining spaces that they were allowed to set up in June in response to dining rooms being ordered closed to help prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Electric radiant heaters — which heat objects rather than the air and therefore are more energy-efficient — are allowed in sidewalk and roadway seating, while natural gas and propane radiant heaters are allowed on sidewalks, although of course they must comply with the city’s fire code.

Related: New York City to make outdoor restaurant dining permanent

The full code is available at the city’s Department of Buildings website.

The mayor’s office also said that issuing permits for the heaters had been streamlined to make the process faster and easier.

Related: New York City Council passes bill allowing restaurants to add a voluntary COVID-19 surcharge of up to 10% on diners’ checks

As in many cities in the United States, New York has allowed restaurants to set up tables outdoors, sometimes in the streets, to allow them to continue doing business while trying to contain the virus, which seems to spread more easily indoors.

In late September, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said the outdoor dining, which had been implemented by more than 10,500 restaurants, would be made permanent , and in some cases be extended to spaces in front of buildings next door to restaurants.

“New Yorkers are resilient and adaptable, and city government should be as well,” Department of Buildings Commissioner Melanie La Rocca said in a statement announcing the heating rules. “Streamlining the outdoor heating requirements will help our friends and neighbors weather this crisis. We are offering clear guidance to restaurant owners so they know what they need to do to safely keep outdoor dining open now that summer has come to a close.”

De Blasio said the guidelines would help keep diners, restaurant workers and pedestrians safe.

“Restaurants make New York City the greatest city in the world, and we're proud to support their continued recovery from this crisis,” he said.

Deputy mayor Laura Anglin said the “Open Restaurants” program that allows for outdoor dining “has been a bright spot in our city, making our streets more vibrant, enhancing our dining culture and offering a healthy and safe way to connect. These sensible guidelines will enable this successful program to continue year-round with comfort heating options for restaurant patrons.”

The mayor’s office also pointed out that outdoor activities in New York have in the past been amplified in response to epidemics. After a cholera outbreak in the city in the 19th century, open spaces including Central Park.

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