

IREDELL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD SERVICE AT FESTIVALS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

The N.C. “Rules Governing the Sanitation of Restaurants and Other Foodhandling Establishments” require that certain food service operations located at festivals and special events obtain a **Permit to Operate** from the local health department before starting operation. Due to a change in the law in October of 2001, a two day exemption per month is not allowed for every vendor. Permits will now be required for even one day festivals and special events. Exemptions and exceptions from this requirement are found at the end of this set of instructions.

The following is required to obtain a Permit to Operate and what will be expected of an operator while the festival or event is in progress.

Individuals with improper equipment or who do not meet permitting requirements will not be issued a permit and will not be allowed to operate.

Application and Deadlines: A food vendor application must be completed and submitted to the Health Department. For major events (4 or more food vendors) applications must be received two weeks prior to the event. For minor events (3 or fewer food vendors) applications must be received one week prior to the event.

Menu: Include a menu, listing all foods and beverages that are to be served. Provide an accurate explanation of exactly how such items are prepared and or served (pre-packaged, cooked on site, etc.) with each completed application. You should choose menu items that require minimum preparation on site.

NO FOOD SHALL BE PREPARED AT HOME.

Permit to Operate: Before the event starts, an Environmental Health Specialist will visit your site with your submitted application. If all requirements have been met, a permit to operate will be issued. No food service or food preparation is allowed on the site until you have received this permit. Your acceptance of this permit implies that you agree to keep the site as originally permitted throughout the duration of the conditions which may be included on the permit. During operation you may be requested to remedy problems observed by the Environmental Health Specialist; prompt compliance is required.

Please be fully set up prior to the start of the event.

Tent: Temporary food establishments are to conduct their business inside a tent or other approved enclosure possessing a roof that is capable of retarding rain, dust, dirt, insects, and other contaminants. **No beach umbrellas.**

Pest control: Measures that are approved and appropriate must be included at all times. Approved fly fans may be considered as an acceptable alternative.

Floor: Start with a clean space and keep it clean. Concrete, asphalt, other approved materials are accepted. Foodservice operations will not be permitted to set up on dirt and grass surfaces, due to the potential contamination of food and foodservice areas resulting from dust, rain and possible spread of fecal contamination by birds and animals. If a problem is to occur such as a grease spill, clean it up immediately using the proper techniques, do not wash spills down storm drains.

Storage: Nothing is allowed on the “floor/ground” except equipment with legs or non-absorbent empty crates. All storage and equipment items whether wrapped or not must be kept above the floor/pallets and under the tent at all times.

Sneeze Guards: Food and food contact surfaces near the customer must be properly protected from customer exposure. The proper use and installation of a sneeze guard (glass or something equal) positioned on the top, front, and ends may be considered acceptable. Sneeze guards are not required if exposed cooking surfaces are positioned in a manner that will limit potential customer access, typically a separation of two feet is acceptable. The placement of a barrier or table between the food preparation and customer serving location is usually deemed acceptable.

Cleaning: All equipment must be cleaned thoroughly and maintained in a sanitary condition throughout the event. A single vat sink equipped with running water (this may be achieved by positioning a cooler or beverage urn with a stop cock nozzle above the sink basin) which is capable of holding the largest utensil that will be used during operation must be provided. You must have one drain board or some specific counter space to use along with the washing operation positioned adjacent to the sink.

Hot Water: Heated water must be provided for the hand-washing basin and utensil sink. The minimum equipment acceptable for this provision would be a pot of water on a stove, or a separate coffee maker.

Sanitizer: Bleach is an acceptable sanitizer when mixed with water to a solution of 50 ppm chlorine. The bleach water can be in a plastic bucket or a spray bottle. Chlorine test strips to test the strength of the sanitizer may be available.

Hand-washing: Employees must be provided with a convenient way to wash their hands. You must provide soap, pan, and disposable towels for the proper washing of hands.

Toilets: Convenient and approved toilets shall be provided for employees. Temporary public toilet facilities provided on the grounds are accepted if they are reasonably convenient, adequate, and kept clean.

Refrigeration: All potentially hazardous foods requiring refrigeration must be kept at or below 45°F. Coolers with ice are acceptable as long as the inside of the coolers are smooth and cleanable. The refrigeration units must have thermometers and temperatures must be monitored throughout the event. Water from food storage coolers must be disposed of in a sanitary facility.

Garbage: Watertight garbage cans with tight-fitting lids must be provided by each stand. Garbage and refuse must be removed daily and disposed of in an approved, sanitary manner.

Wastewater and Sewage: Wastewater from the stand must be emptied into a sanitary sewer. Do not empty storage tanks or catch buckets into storm drains or on the ground. A collection bucket or other basin can be used to hold wastewater until it may be properly discarded.

Transport of foods: All foods must be protected while in transit to the permitted temporary foodservice establishment. Food prepared off site must be prepared in a kitchen approved by the local health department. Transport containers must be able to maintain proper temperatures for a reasonable amount of time, keep out potential contamination, and be non-absorbent and easy to clean.

Source of foods: All foods shall be clean, wholesome, free from adulteration, and obtained from an approved source. **No food shall be prepared at home.**

Hamburgers and poultry: Hamburgers which are formed into patties separated by clean paper or other wrapping materials, and ready to cook are permitted within the stand. Additionally, pre-cut poultry must be prepared in an approved market, plant, or restaurant. In other words, you can not make patties and/or cut chicken within the stand.

Prohibited foods: Potentially hazardous foods such as cream-filled pastries and pies, or salads such as potato, chicken, ham, or crab, must not be prepared or served within temporary foodservice establishments.

Prohibited Drinks: Milkshakes, raw apple juice, beverages made from raw fruits and vegetables resulting in a pH above 4.6.

Hot foods: Holding units must keep foods at or above 140°F until served. It is recommended to have a thermometer.

Diseases: No person who has a contagious or infectious disease transmittable by food or drink is allowed to work in a temporary foodservice establishment.

Hair restraints: Hair nets and/or caps should be worn at all times by employees who are responsible for preparing or serving food or drink.

Tobacco: No tobacco is to be used in any form while handling, preparing, or serving food or while in the foodservice area.

Worker information: Each vendor should keep a list of names and phone numbers of people involved in food preparation and serving, including persons handling the food back at the restaurant.

Self-service: Customer self-service of food is not allowed. This includes condiments such as lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, and onions. However, condiments such as mustard, ketchup, and relish can be dispensed from squeeze bottles or approved pump dispensers. Single-service packages of condiments may also be used.

Other Permitting Conditions

- ◆ A Temporary Food Establishment must operate in conjunction with a public event such as a fair, festival, or carnival.
- ◆ The Temporary Food Establishment must operate on the property of the public exhibition. A person or facility holding a permanent food service permit that prohibits outdoor cooking or serving stations may not be issue a Temporary Food Establishment permit on their own property. This prohibition also applies to subcontractors or persons receiving supplies or equipment from the permitted foodservice facility.