

Harris County
HCPHES
Public Health & Environmental Services

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TEMPORARY FOOD PERMITS

What are temporary food service establishments?

Temporary food service establishments are food booths which are associated with a particular event for no longer than 14 days. Temporary food establishments include any food booth in which food and/or drink is prepared and/or served.

What is the purpose of permitting and inspecting temporary food establishments?

The permitting and inspection program's primary goal is to protect the public's health. To accomplish this, Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES) wants to ensure that all temporary food service establishments:

- are properly constructed and equipped; and
- prepare, store and serve food and/or drink in a manner that minimizes opportunities for contamination.

Will my temporary food booth be inspected?

Yes. Both non-profit and profit temporary food establishments will be inspected by a Harris County Environmental Public Health Investigator at least once during the event. Of major concern to the inspector will be cleanliness, food storage arrangements, personal hygienic practices and proper food temperatures. Violations concerning these areas will be expected to be corrected immediately. Feel free to ask the investigator questions. The investigator is there to assist you in providing safe, sanitary food to the public. Refer to the handout: "Sanitation Guidelines for Temporary Food Vendors."

Must temporary food service establishment purchase a permit to operate?

Yes. Temporary food service establishments that are located in areas under HCPHES' jurisdiction must obtain a temporary food permit to operate.

- All establishments that serve food and/or drinks and/or scoop ice must purchase a permit.
- A permit issued to a permanent establishment will only cover a temporary booth at that same address if the booth is owned by that same person.
- A separate temporary food permit is required for every food booth at any given event.
- Operation of a temporary food booth without a temporary food establishment permit could result in a citation issued to the person in charge of the food booth.

If a food vendor is operating more than one food booth, how many permits must he/she purchase?

- A permit must be purchased for each food booth.

What are the exemptions to the temporary food establishment permit?

- Booths that sell only pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous food (candy, chips, frozen novelties) or unopened canned or bottle drinks are exempted from the temporary permit requirement.
- Non-profit temporary establishments that provide proof of their non-profit status (Tax Form 501C3) are also exempt. A non-profit, temporary food service establishment is defined as a booth which is operated directly by members of the charity organization; **all** proceeds go to the charity. A food booth, which donates a portion of its proceeds to a charity, would **not** be considered a non-profit temporary establishment.

How much does a temporary food permit cost?

The cost of a temporary food permit is \$80.00, provided that it is purchased **no later than two full business days prior to the beginning of the event.** Failure to purchase a temporary permit within these guidelines will result in a fee of \$160.00

How do I obtain a temporary food permit?

Anyone who plans to operate a temporary food establishment should contact the Environmental Public Health Division of HCPHES and obtain a temporary event packet prior to the event. Read the packet thoroughly and complete the operational statement found within the packet and return it to Environmental Public Health office along with your payment. You will save money if you purchase your permit at least two business days prior to the event.

You may purchase a permit in several ways:

- **IN PERSON** – You may purchase the permit at the Environmental Public Health Office **no later than two full business days prior to the beginning of the event.**
Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services
101 South Richey, Suite G
Pasadena, Texas 77506
Monday -Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- **BY MAIL** – Requests for a permit application to be mailed to you must be made **at least five weeks prior to the event.** The permit application, permit fee and operations questionnaire must be returned to the Environmental Public Health office, **no later than four weeks prior to the event.** Permits purchased **later** than four weeks prior to the event must be obtained from the Environmental Public Health office, and must be paid for with cash, money order, or cashier's check. You may request to purchase a permit through the mail by calling our office at (713) 274-6300.
- **ONLINE** – www.hcphes.org. Fill out the operational statement and send it back to the Environmental website for approval within three weeks of the event. Upon approval to operate the temporary food booth, you may purchase the permit online by credit card **at least 14 days before the start of the event OR you** may send a money order or business check to the Environmental Public Health office no later than four weeks prior to the beginning of the event. Payment made within four weeks of the event may be made in person by cash, cashier's check or money order at the Environmental Public Health office.

- **ONSITE** – The permit should be purchased prior to the event. Late temporary permits cost \$160.00 each and may be purchased at the event with a money order or cashier's check if the booth is in compliance with health code standards. Payment must be available when the booth begins any preparation or sale of food and/or drink. Food booths operating without a valid and current permit may be asked to close if the operation poses a health hazard or if payment for the permit is not available at the time of the health inspection.. Only money orders and cashier's checks will be accepted at the event site. **Investigators will not collect cash at the temporary event site.**

What happens if my food booth does not comply with the requirements for temporary food establishments or if I refuse to buy a temporary permit?

You will be asked to cease all food operations immediately. Refusal to cease operations when requested is likely to result in a citation being issued to the person in charge or criminal and/or civil charges being filed. Additionally, continuation of operations may result in an appeal to the Harris County Sheriff's Department for assistance.

NOTE: The Fire Marshall's Office conducts safety inspections of temporary events. See attached handout for fire safety guidelines.