Frequently Asked Questions for Temporary Event Food Facilities

The following information is meant to help concessionaires understand the requirements for setting up and operating a temporary event food facility that is compliant with Baltimore County Code (COBCR) 1.01.01, the State of Maryland Code (COMAR) 10.15.03 and also the State of Maryland code. The goal is to operate in a safe and sanitary manner in order to protect the public health from transmission of disease.

Who must apply for a Temporary Food Permit Application?

Anyone who is planning on selling food/beverages at a “temporary” public event (advertised on social media, flyers, newspaper, tv, or other) needs to apply for a permit. The “temporary” event is defined as a fixed location for less than 14 consecutive days in conjunction with a single event or celebration. Temporary event food service permits are required by law.

Where do I get an application packet?

Applications are available at the Division of Environmental Health Services and on the website.

What is in the application packet?

- Cover memo outlining the permit application process
- Application survey asking questions regarding the demographics of your business and the event; the food/beverages to be prepared and served, methods used to keep foods hot/cold, hand/utensil/equipment washing and procedures; drawing of food facility set-up
- Statement of Workmen’s Compensation Insurance
- Permit fee information
- Information for setting up handwashing facilities, 3 compartment sinks, and foodborne illness

Why do I have to return the completed application packet at least 2 weeks prior to my event?

This will give the Health Department staff ample time to review the application, make suggestions that will enable you to operate more safely, and make the inspection proceed more efficiently.
What are the Baltimore County requirements for obtaining a permit and passing inspection?

The following are parameters that the Health Department staff will be looking at during the application process and inspection:

**Construction:** Any flooring must be nonabsorbent, smooth and durable. Ceilings must be weatherproofed and cover areas of food preparation, storage and service. Any walls must be constructed to address adverse weather conditions.

All food contact surfaces must be smooth, nonporous and easily cleanable. All food must be protected from direct contact with customers. When thinking about the layout of the food service facility, ensure that there is the shortest distance possible between food preparation, cooking and serving. All cooking is recommended to occur at the back of the facility, away from the public. If using a grill or barbecue, the area must be visibly separated by at least 3 feet from the public.

**Plumbing:** Installed plumbing must meet plumbing codes and temporary arrangements must be approved by the health department.

**Cooking processes:** Proper heating internal temperatures must be met:

- **Poultry*** 165 degrees F for 15 seconds
- **Raw meat cooked in microwave** 165 degrees F stirred and held for 2 minutes
- **Ground/reconstructed meat products** 155 degrees F for 15 seconds
- **Shell eggs not served immediately** 155 degrees F for 15 seconds
- **Shell eggs served immediately** 145 degrees F for 15 seconds
- **Pork** 145 degrees F for 15 seconds
- **Fruits, vegetables, commercially ready-to eat-food cooked for hot holding** 135 degrees F for 15 seconds
- **Rare roast beef/beefsteak served immediately** 130 degrees F for 15 seconds
***In Baltimore County, the preparation of raw chicken or chicken products is not allowed on site in a food booth, stand, or tent.

Thawing: All frozen foods must be thawed prior to the cooking process. Foods may be thawed in the following manner: in refrigerator units at temperatures not to exceed 41 degrees F, under cold running water, in the microwave oven, or during the cooking process.

Reheating: All potentially hazardous foods (food capable of supporting infectious disease organisms) that have been cooked and then refrigerated shall be rapidly reheated to at least 165 degrees F 15 seconds within 2 hours prior to being served or hot held. Food may be reheated in a microwave or on grill or propane stove. Do not use steam tables or other hot holding equipment for reheating purposes. Crockpots are not permitted.

Storage: If a potentially hazardous food is not being served or prepared, it must be stored at temperatures below 41 degrees F or above 135 degrees F (hot holding). You may not keep items out at room temperature.

An exception is the storage of potentially hazardous reduced oxygen packaged foods and pasteurized crabmeat. These must be stored at a maximum of 38 degrees F if using refrigeration solely.

Leftovers: Leftovers may not be served or sold to the public. Hot held foods not used at the end of the day must be discarded.

Thermometers: You must have a metal stem thermometer on site to be used to check internal food temperatures. It must be calibrated from 0 degrees F to 220 degrees F. All refrigerators, freezers, cold and hot holding units must contain an accurate, visible thermometer.

Food source: You must be able to verify the food source of everything that is being served. The Health Department must approve all food and beverage sources, meaning everything must be of commercial origin. Items made/canned at home, including ice, are not permitted.

Food preparation: All food preparation must be performed either inside the temporary food facility or in an approved commissary. Home preparation of food/beverage is not permitted. This includes sampling products.

It is recommended that items be pre-wrapped and ready to serve as much as possible. It must be protected by barrier, wrapping or cover.
Handwashing facilities: Please refer to the attached diagram for explanation of required handwashing equipment/set-up.

Dishwashing facilities: Equipment and utensils must be washed in a 3 compartment sink, set-up approved by the Health Department. The process includes an area to wash, rinse, and sanitize equipment. There also needs to be a plan in place to dispose of waste water.

Cleaning of surfaces: The Health Department will be looking at how the cleaning and disinfection of surfaces is conducted in the facility. Any cleaning chemicals must be stored safely away from the food preparation/storage area.

Food handlers: Only employees working in the food facility may be in the structure. Smoking, eating, drinking while working is not permitted.

Employees who are ill should not report to work. Employees must practice good hand hygiene, and wear personal protective equipment (ie. gloves) as appropriate. They should not be touching ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.

Waste management: Discarding of waste must be outlined for the Health Department. All forms of waste (trash, liquid, grease) must be disposed of in a safe and approved manner. It cannot be dumped in the street, storm drains, or the ground.

How do I reduce the potential for food borne illness in my temporary event facility?

The majority of food borne illness comes from improper cooling, reheating, hot holding and excessive food handling. Minimizing the amount of these processes will decrease the risk of disease transmission. Try to cook to serve as much as possible and streamline food handling procedures.

What happens if the Health Department finds something wrong with my temporary event food facility?

Any critical violation (practices that will lead to a food-borne illness) must be corrected immediately. If it cannot be corrected immediately, the facility is subject to closure. Other violations may be corrected within a certain time frame as outlined by the Department of Health staff.
**Who do I contact with more questions about a temporary event food facility permit?**

You may call the Division of Environmental Health Services at 410-887-3663 and ask to speak to the Environmental Health Specialist on office duty. Our email address is **ehs@baltimorecountymd.gov.**