

Special Event FAQ's

Do I need a permit to sell food at a temporary event?

Yes, a permit is required to sell any food or drinks to the public. This includes packaged and bottled items.

How do I get a permit?

Contact the coordinator/organizer of the event or the Tulsa City County Health Department (THD) Special Event Coordinator.

1. Get permission from sponsor to participate
2. Contact THD Special Event Coordinator regarding permits and set up requirements
3. The booth will be inspected on site at the event before it opens and if all requirements for operating a food booth are met, the inspector will issue a permit. Permit fees are collected at the time of licensing.
4. For fee exemption, you must contact the THD Special Event Coordinator to submit proof of non-profit status and complete a letter of responsibility.

What conditions are attached to the permit?

In order to qualify for a permit, the applicant must agree to operate in accordance with all applicable state laws and such inspectional procedures as are needed to ensure compliance.

Oklahoma State Department of Health food code requires food to be handled and sold from a fully screened booth, unless the food is completely wrapped and remains so until sold. The booth must be equipped with facilities for washing hands, and for washing and sanitizing utensils and equipment to keep potentially hazardous foods at the proper temperature. The full list of requirements can be found in our special event guidelines.

My food is prepackaged; do I still need a permit?

Yes, a permit is still required. However, a fully screened booth will not be necessary, nor will hand washing and utensil washing facilities be required, unless you intend to open the packages (e.g., to give samples). Then the requirements are the same as for any other booth with open food.

I am only selling drinks; do I still need a permit?

Yes. Beverages, whether prepackaged (bottles, cans or other) or mixed by the vendor, are considered food and a permit is required.

I am not selling any food or drink, but I will be giving away samples. Do I need a permit?

No, a permit is not required to give away food or drink to the public. However If the samples of food/drink are open (not wrapped), a fully equipped booth is required.

How can I be a vendor at a temporary event?

For any temporary event, whether it is a single day or several days, you must first get approval from the sponsor or event organizer. After the event sponsor/organizer approves you as a vendor, you must contact the THD Special Event Coordinator for permit requirements.

Can I set up a temporary food facility outside a shopping mall, flea market, or farmers market?

No. The temporary food facility must be in connection with a community event with a sponsor. The event may not occur more than once a month.

How much does a permit cost?

There are several different permit fees depending on the length of the event and the location of the event. Contact the THD Special Event Coordinator for the permit fee for the specific event in question.

My booth is only to raise money for our club; do I still need a permit?

Depends. A permit is usually required for all food vendors. The potential risk attached to handling and selling food is the same, no matter where the proceeds go. If you are a non profit or a one time fundraiser, please contact THD Special Event Coordinator to discuss your options.

What are the responsibilities of the sponsor (organizer or coordinator) of the event?

The sponsor must ensure that all temporary food facilities comply with the Oklahoma State Department of Health Food Code. The sponsor is also required to contact the THD Special Event Coordinator and provide a complete list of food/beverage vendors as well as their contact information two weeks prior to the event. In addition, the sponsor is responsible for shared facilities such as toilets and wastewater, grease and garbage disposal. They should ensure that food booth operators know where to find potable water and ice.

Will an inspector come to check my booth?

An inspector will be on site to issue permits, usually an hour or more before the official start time of the event, to ensure food is being handled safely. All food vendors are subject to inspection event if they are currently licensed mobile food establishment that do not require a temporary permit. All food booth operators are expected to follow the food safety regulations at all times.

Will I be fined if I make a mistake at the event?

Inspectors will not issue a fine during the event. However, the inspector will expect corrections to be made when necessary, and may close your booth temporarily until he/she considers it safe. If you have gross health violations and your issues cannot be corrected, the inspector may suspend your permit, which means you will have to close down. Potentially hazardous foods with major violations (e.g., out of temperature, etc.) will be discarded.

In extreme cases an inspector can issue a citation, which means you would have to go to court.

Must all booths be enclosed?

The booth must have overhead protection, a smooth and cleanable floor and needs to be fully screened on all sides if you are handling open food. If all food is prepackaged and the packages will be sold unopened, no screening is required. If the booth is only pouring beverages then only screening on 3 sides will be required

Do I need my own hand-washing facilities - even if I am right next to the public restrooms?

Yes. A hand washing station must be set up with sufficient hot water available for the duration of the event in each booth where open foods or beverages are handled. See the special event guidelines on how to properly set up your temporary hand washing facility

Can I cook outside the booth?

No. All food preparation is required to be conducted in a screened in area. If a smoker is to be used, the food may be wrapped at all times during the cooking process and brought back into the screened in booth before unwrapping and handling the food.

I want to join an event this coming weekend and I live far away. Can I still get a permit?

Yes. Distance from the event is not a problem. Call Tulsa Health Department Food Protection Services and ask for the Special Events Coordinator. We request that you give notice more than five working days prior to the event to discuss requirements. Permits will not be issued for failure to properly set up correctly due to not being familiar with the area requirements or being a last minute addition.

I have a hot dog cart with an annual permit to operate in the state of Oklahoma. Do I need another permit to sell at a temporary event?

Possibly, depending on the city of the event. If your annual permit is current and you are operating the cart in the same way that it was permitted, no other food permits are necessary unless there is a city ordinance where the event is taking place that requires a city business permit. Contact Tulsa Health Department Special Event Coordinator to discuss city permits in Tulsa County. Additionally, make sure that you have permission from the event sponsor to attend. Many events charge participants an entrance fee.

I want to sell products that I have canned in jars; can I sell the product at events?

No. Only food that is manufactured in a licensed and inspected commercial food kitchen is allowed to be sold to the public. This includes candies and baked items.

Do I need a permit to sell pre-packaged foods by Hershey's, Nestle, and other brands of candy and chips?

Yes. A hand washing station may be required depending on product handling and sampling.

What are the permit costs for local restaurants that want to run a food booth at an event?

Fees are the same for all vendors operating a food booth. The fee depends on the event duration and location.

I am organizing an event this summer. Can we have a consultation from the Tulsa Health Department Special Events Coordinator at one of our meetings to explain the requirements?

The Special Events Coordinator will be happy to attend your pre-event meeting. Please make sure that you give us plenty of notice so we can find a mutually convenient date and time.

I attend many temporary events during the year. Can I get an annual permit?

Possibly. An annual permit is issued as a mobile food establishment. There are different types of mobile permits. If you have a food truck or a push cart a permit can be issued. If you only sell prepackaged foods and nothing else, a retail packaged mobile permit may be issued. If you do not meet any of the mobile requirements for food sales, an annual permit cannot be issued.

I already have a permit for my restaurant in Tulsa County. Does that permit cover me for temporary events?

No. The permit to operate a restaurant does not cover temporary events, even if it is on the street outside your facility. A temporary food facility has to be set up in a specific way and will require a separate inspection by the Tulsa Health Department. However, you may display samples of food outside your restaurant during a special event, and invite patrons to come inside to eat with no additional permit.

Where is your office located?

We are located at 5051 South 129th East Ave. Tulsa, OK. 74134

Who can I call if I have a question?

All questions should first be directed to the sponsor of the event. If the sponsor is unable to help or you have additional questions, please call Tulsa Health Department Food Protection at (918)595-4300 and ask for the Special Events Coordinator or other temporary event staff on duty.