



Lewis County Public Health & Social Services

Health News

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Food Safety at Public Venues

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Along with home barbecues and picnics, the month of May kicks off the annual increase in outdoor and temporary food vending. Public events like the Spring Youth Fair, the Southwest Washington Fair, Packwood's legendary flea markets, local farmers' markets, and various fundraisers draw a host of temporary food vendors to take care of our thirst and hunger.

Lewis County Public Health & Social Services (LCPHSS) works with these vendors to address food safety components whenever food or beverages are offered to the public – regardless of whether they're offered for a price or given away for free. We do this through temporary food establishment permits, which require the food service to be associated with an organized event, like those noted above.

For public safety, whether operating from a custom trailer or a folding table under a pop-up awning, temporary food vendors are required to follow the same basic food safety criteria as a brick-and-mortar restaurant. However, some modifications are allowed due to their temporary nature.

- Hand washing facilities are still required, but can include any of the following:
 - Plumbed hand-wash sinks with hot and cold running water in mobile food trucks or trailers, churches, granges, etc.
 - Hand-wash sinks using holding tanks and small hot water heaters in mobile food trucks or trailers or temporary food booths; or
 - 5-gallon insulated containers with continuous flow spigots, hot water, soap, paper towels and catch buckets for wastewater and garbage in temporary food booths.
- Foods must still be protected from contamination. This might include:

- Overhead covers, ground covers, and/or plastic side ‘walls’ to protect food from wind and dust.
- Separate ice chests for raw meats and ready to eat foods.
- Facilities for cleaning and sanitizing utensils, cutting boards, counters, and any other food-contact surface.
- Cold holding equipment might consist of refrigerators, freezers, ice chests with ice, or any combination of these.
- Food safety temperatures, including those for hot holding, cold holding, and cooking are the same.
- Produce must still be washed to remove potential contaminants.

All food workers in restaurants and other permanent establishments are required to maintain valid food worker cards. Temporary establishments are only required to have one person with a food worker card. However, that person must be in the food prep area at all times and is responsible for ensuring all public safety requirements are being met.

Food worker card classes can usually be completed in an hour and cover:

- Causes of foodborne illness
- Hand washing
- Avoiding bare hand contact with ready to eat foods
- What are potentially hazardous foods?
- What are safe temperatures for cooking, hot holding, cold holding, and reheating?
- Methods to safely cool foods
- Methods to safely thaw foods
- Avoiding cross contamination
- Dishwashing, cleaning, and general sanitation

In-person food worker card classes are offered at LCPHSS on the first Tuesday of every month at 9:00 am, or can be taken online at any time. The online class is available in English, Spanish, Korean, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Cambodian at www.foodworkercard.wa.gov.

The Washington State Food and Beverage Workers’ Manual (also known as the food workers’ booklet or the food handlers’ booklet) is available in English, Spanish, Korean, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Punjabi. The manual can be downloaded from: <http://bit.ly/2XPNSnE>.

Temporary event permit applications are available at LCPHSS, 360 NW North Street, Chehalis, 3rd floor, or online at <http://bit.ly/2vwCGA2>. Completed applications can then be submitted in person at LCPHSS at address above, by fax at (360) 740-1438, or by mail at the address above.

For more information about food worker classes or food safety, call (360) 740-1222 or email vanessa.ruelas@lewiscountywa.gov. Follow us on Twitter @LCPHSS.

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