

FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR EXEMPT TEMPORARY EVENTS

The Alabama Department of Public Health allows for an exemption from permit requirements for food service at certain short-term temporary events. This exemption does NOT relieve the sponsors and operators from the responsibility to provide safe food to their customers. The guidelines below must be followed in order to provide a safe product to the public. For more information, contact the environmental office at your local county health department.

(1.) **Application for exemption** - Fill out an application at least 5 days before the event. Exemptions are issued for the event itself and ONLY include food service activities within the event site. Exemptions are NOT issued for individual food service facilities that are part of an event when the event itself is not exempt. Exemptions will NOT be issued to sell or use home-canned foods.

(2.) **Source of foods** - To minimize the risk of food-borne illness, home-prepared foods, ice made at home, raw (unpasteurized) milk, or storage of foods at private homes should not be used. Meats brought in to use must be USDA inspected and purchased from a processing plant inspected by the Department of Agriculture or from a retailer who has a health department permit. Again, exemptions will NOT be issued to sell or use home-canned foods.

(3.) **Cooking** - For safety of the public, all cooking of foods must be done towards the back or the booth. When barbequing or using a grill, the equipment must be separated (roped off) from the public. Adequate protection from flies and other insects should be provided. Screening, mesh flaps, or fly fans can be used as necessary. Overhead protection must be provided for food handling areas. Tents and other materials should be fire retardant.

(4.) **Cold holding** - Proper refrigeration or cold storage facilities are necessary to keep "potentially hazardous foods" (such as meat, poultry, eggs, milk, and fish) requiring cold storage at a safe temperature.

Mechanical refrigeration is best; however, in case of possible power outages, it is still advisable to have a backup method such as insulated containers and ice that is clean, purchased at a store that has a health department permit, or delivered from a facility with a health department permit. Storage of prepacked food in contact with water or undrained ice must be avoided. Wrapped foods such as sandwiches must not be stored in direct contact with ice. Ice for consumption must be separated from ice used for any other purpose, and kept in a food grade container.

(5.) **Reheating** - Crock pots, steam tables, or other hot holding devices cannot be safely used as a means of heating up foods; they are to be used only for hot holding purposes. We recommend that reheated foods be done on the grill or on a propane stove to bring the food temperature to at least 165F within 30 minutes.

Crock pots, steam tables, or other hot holding devices are slow cooking, and may allow the rapid multiplication of bacteria that cause food poisoning. All cooking equipment must be designed, and intended, to be used as cooking equipment and properly installed to meet local fire and safety codes. Equipment such as deep fat fryers must be set on a stable surface.

(6.) **Hot holding** - For hot holding, electrical equipment is recommended. However, other methods, such as propane stoves, grills or other equipment capable of holding food at 140F and above may be used, and should be available for backup. Canned heat can be used, if it maintains proper temperatures.

(7.) A **thermometer** must be available and used to check internal food temperatures. Inexpensive metal stem or digital thermometers can usually be purchased from restaurant supply companies or from large variety stores. They must be able to measure from 0 to 220F.

(8.) **Handwashing facilities** - This facility must have *at least* warm running water, soap, individual paper towels, and a bucket to collect the dirty water. For example, a jug of warm water or tea urn with a turn spout (not a push button) is an acceptable method to obtain warm running water that may be sufficient in situations with limited food handling. Hands must not be washed in dishwashing sinks.

(9.) **Direct hand contact** of ready-to-eat food is generally prohibited. Use single-use, disposable gloves, tongs or utensils to handle food whenever possible.

(10.) **Sick workers** (with a cold, flu, or other disease that may be transmitted through food, or with an infected cut) can NOT allowed in the booth.

(11.) **Smoking, eating, or drinking** by persons in a food booth must be prohibited. No unauthorized persons can be allowed in the booth.

(12.) **Chemicals** (detergents, sanitizers, insect spray, etc.) must be stored in a separate place away from foods and plates, cups, and so forth, so no accidental contamination or spillage is possible.

(13.) **Dishwashing facilities** - Equipment and utensils must be washed using a three-step process. The process includes washing the utensils in hot water, rinsing in clean water, and sanitizing. After sanitizing, the equipment and utensils should be allowed to air dry.

The only easy way to use this process is with a three-compartment sink, with one compartment for each step.

If you choose to use bleach as the sanitizer, the recommended STARTING concentration is 1 capful of bleach added to 1 gallon of cool water. The concentration of 50-200 parts per million must be verified with a test kit.

Dishwashing sinks can not be used as handwashing facilities.

(14.) **Restrooms** – Event sponsors must provide access to restrooms with hot and cold running water for foodworkers.

(15.) **Liquid waste** must not be dumped into streets, storm drains, or on the ground. Sponsors must provide waste collection points for proper disposal.

(16.) **Wiping cloths** - Use a bucket of clean, sanitizing water for wiping cloth storage. Wiping towels used for wiping down counters and table tops must be clean and used for no other purpose. The towels must be rinsed in a sanitizing solution frequently. If you choose to use bleach as the sanitizer, the recommended STARTING concentration is 1 capful of bleach added to 1 gallon of cool water. The concentration of 50-200 parts per million must be verified with a test kit. NOTE - Do not add soap to the water as this makes the solution ineffective as a sanitizer.

(17.) **Hair restraints** are to be worn when handling food.

(18.) Bring a **broom** and a dustpan.

(19.) **Garbage** - Sponsors should provide sanitary disposal of garbage. Containers must be insect and rodent proof if not removed promptly.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

Improper cooling, reheating, hot holding, and excessive food handling are the major causes of foodborne illness outbreaks. In order to reduce the risk of an illness, you must:

AVOID COOLING AND REHEATING FOODS. For example, use canned chili instead of trying to prepare fresh chili; prepare taco meat just before serving it rather than cooking ahead, cooling and reheating; use canned refried beans instead of making beans from scratch.

AVOID HOT HOLDING OF FOODS. For example, make tacos and burritos to order rather than trying to keep them hot after cooking; cook raw shish kebob to order instead of cooking ahead of time and holding "warm".

MINIMIZE FOOD HANDLING. Keep food handling methods as simple as possible. For example, commercial products such as store-bought potato, macaroni, or pasta salads are easy to use and easy to handle. We recommend that these types of prepared commercial products be used rather than trying to prepare them yourself ahead of time or in the booth.

PROPER TEMPERATURES - Cooking foods to less than the required temperature is NOT ADEQUATE for food safety.

COOKING TEMPERATURES

FOOD	TEMPERATURE	TIME
Potentially hazardous foods not otherwise specified, including eggs for immediate service	145F	15 sec
Pork and any food containing pork; game animals; ratites	155F	15 sec
Poultry, poultry stuffing, stuffed meats and stuffings containing meat	165F	15 sec
Ground beef, ground fish (fish sticks, patties, etc.), other ground meats, injected meats and eggs other than Part 1 above	155F	15 sec or
	150F	1 min or
	145F	3 min

Large cuts of meat (over 3 pounds) are not allowed to be cooked (for example, barbecued), these will need to be cut into smaller pieces so that the cooking time is much faster.

REHEATING

See "Important Points to Remember" above. If there is no way to avoid reheating a food, then the County Health Department will require specific equipment for this operation. All potentially hazardous foods that have been cooked and refrigerated shall be rapidly reheated throughout to at least 165F for 15 seconds before being placed in a hot food holding facility.

HOLDING

COLD HOLDING - Potentially hazardous foods stored cold should be stored at an internal food temperature of about 40F or below (under refrigeration), 45F is the maximum allowed refrigeration temperature.

HOT HOLDING - See "Important Points to Remember" above. If there is no way to avoid hot holding of potentially hazardous food, then the food must be kept at 140F or above.

Storage of potentially hazardous food at temperatures between 45F and 140F is NOT ADEQUATE for food safety and must be avoided.