



ILLEGAL FOOD VENDING – HOW TO GET LEGAL

Food and drinks purchased from unpermitted vendors can make people sick. There is absolutely no way to guarantee that food sold from unpermitted vendors is safe to eat. Restaurants and other regulated food facilities are required by law to learn and follow comprehensive food safety principles designed to protect people from getting sick. All permitted food facilities are inspected regularly by the Environmental Health Department to help ensure that all food safety laws are followed so that food is safe. Unpermitted vending is not only illegal, but dangerous for the customers who eat food from 'illegal' vendors. So how can 'illegal' vendors get legal?

GET A PERMIT

An Environmental Health permit is required any time food or drinks are sold or given away to the public. There are different permits for different methods of selling food and drinks (i.e. mobile carts, catering trucks, swap meets, community events, supermarkets, and restaurants). Here's what you need to do to open a permitted food facility:

- Fill out the application for the type of food facility you want to open.
- Complete the evaluation process (i.e. plan check review, onsite inspection, etc.)
- Pay all required fees

Once these requirements are met it is the responsibility of the food vendor to find where they may operate legally. So what happens to vendors that sell or give food away to the public and don't have an Environmental Health Permit?

SELLING WITHOUT A PERMIT

Vendors found selling or giving food away to the public without an Environmental Health permit will receive any of the following enforcement actions:

- A Notice of Violation (NOV) is a notice that the activity observed by the enforcement officer is illegal and instructs the operator to stop immediately.
- An administrative or criminal citation may also be issued for each and every day the violation continues. In these cases, a fine or restitution payment is required to be paid to the Environmental Health Department, the court system, or both.
- An unpermitted vendor may also be cited by multiple enforcement agencies.

The Environmental Health Department will guide anyone wanting to open a food facility through the entire evaluation process. Feel free to check out our website or give your local area Environmental Health office a call.