



Public Information

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency • Environmental Health Division
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COMMUNITY EVENTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **What is a Temporary Food Facility?**

As defined in the California Retail Food Code, “Temporary Food Facility” (TFF) means a food facility approved by the enforcement officer that operates at a fixed location for the duration of an approved community event only as part of the community event.

2. **Do I need a permit to sell or give away food at a community event?**

Yes, a permit is required even if the food is given away. The requirements apply to all persons participating in food events, regardless of non-profit status, and include sampling.

3. **My food is prepackaged...do I still need a permit?**

Yes, a permit is still required. Prepackaged food products may be sold from an annually permitted mobile food facility, cottage food operation, or from a TFF-2. However, since the food is prepackaged, certain requirements may not apply.

4. **I am only selling or giving away drinks ... do I still need a permit?**

Yes. Beverages are considered food and a permit is required. The requirements for bottled or canned beverages are the same as for prepackaged food.

5. **Can I prepare food at my home for sale/distribution from a Temporary Food Facility?**

Food intended for public consumption may not be prepared in a home unless it is in a registered or permitted cottage food operation. All food must be obtained from approved sources. Non-potentially hazardous beverages and bakery items given away or sold at a community event by nonprofit charitable organizations or by an established club or organization that operates under the authorization of a school or educational facility for fundraising purposes at community events are exempted from this restriction.

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

Yes, a permit is required for all food vendors offering food for sale to the public. The potential risk associated with handling food is the same, regardless of where the proceeds go.

7. Can I set up a Temporary Food Facility outside a shopping mall or my permitted food facility, or in a park?

No, the Temporary Food Facility must operate in connection with an approved community event. "Community Event" means an event that is of civic, political, public, or educational nature, including state and county fairs, city festivals, circuses, and other public gathering events approved by the local enforcement agency. Store grand openings, anniversary celebrations or promotional give-away events do not constitute community events. The community event organizer, along with each Temporary Food Facility, must meet certain requirements and obtain a permit for the event.

8. Do I need a permit to have a party for invited guests?

No, private parties intended only for members of an organization and/or their invited guests do not require a permit. If the event is advertised to the public; however, then a permit is required.

9. Can I have a Community Event and operate a Temporary Food Facility out of my home?

No, a private home cannot be permitted as a Temporary Food Facility. The California Retail Food Code prohibits the use of a private home, a room used as living or sleeping quarters, or an area directly opening into a room used as living or sleeping quarters for conducting food facility operations. You may, however, operate a Cottage Food Operation if you have a valid registration or permit from Ventura County.

10. How long is the permit valid?

If it is not an annual permit, the permit issued to a Temporary Food Facility vendor or to an organizer is valid only for the duration of that specific community event. A new application must be submitted, and a new permit obtained for each different community event.

11. Is there any way to reduce the organizer and food vendor fees?

Yes, you may receive a full fee waiver if your organization meets the following criteria:

1. Documentation is provided that verifies that a non-profit charitable organization is operating exclusively as a community event organizer or the temporary food facility operator.
2. At least one member of the non-profit charitable organization maintains an active Temporary Food Facility/Community Event Certificate of Training issued by the Environmental Health Division; and this member is available at the event.
3. The application for the community event is received by the Environmental Health Division at least 30 days prior to the operation of any food facility at the event that is the subject of the application. The application for the TFF operated by the non-profit charitable organization must be included with the organizer application and must be received at least 30 days prior to operation at the event.

A non-profit charitable organization means either of the following:

(a) A corporation incorporated pursuant to the Nonprofit Corporation Law (Division 2 (commencing with Section 5000) of Title 1 of the Corporation Code), that is exempt from taxation pursuant to paragraphs (1) to (10), inclusive, and paragraph (19) of Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code and Section 23701d of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

(b) An organization that was organized and is in operation for charitable purposes and meets the requirements of Section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

12. Is there training available on the requirements for Temporary Food Facilities?

Yes, we offer a Temporary Food Facility Food Handler Training class in the Hall of Administration at the Government Center. It is held once a month, from 9 am to noon and it is free to all participants. One of the requirements to be eligible for a fee waiver is that a member of the non-profit charitable organization attend this class and pass a test. You must include a copy of your training certificate with each application in order to receive the waiver. The certified individual must be available at the event. With the certificate, non-profit charitable organizations may receive a full fee waiver if all the applications are submitted at least 30 days in advance.

The only certificate that will provide a fee waiver is the Ventura County Environmental Health Temporary Food Facility Food Handler training certificate. National food safety training as required for permanent food facilities, such as ServSafe or Prometric, or any training certificate issued by another county or state can't be used to obtain a waiver.

13. As a food vendor, what other permits do I need?

First, you must have permission from the organizer to participate in the event. The organizer must include you on their list of vendors participating at the community event. Annually permitted Mobile Food Facilities, Cottage Food Operations and Temporary Food Facilities must be included on the organizer's list. The local Fire Department may also have requirements for your booth.

14. As an organizer, what other permits do I need?

You may need to obtain a Conditional Use Permit from the city where the event will take place. You may need to contact California Alcoholic Beverage Control and local police if you offer alcoholic beverages. You will need to contact the California Board of Equalization regarding sales tax payment.

15. Does the booth need to be enclosed?

The booth must have overhead protection, cleanable flooring and be fully screened on all four sides if you are handling open food. If all foods are prepackaged, and the packages are sold or given away unopened, no screening is required, just overhead protection.

16. I have a hot dog cart with an annual permit to operate in Ventura County. Do I need another permit to operate at a community event?

No. If your Mobile Food Facility (MFF) permit is current and valid in this county, no other Environmental Health permits are required. If you have a vehicle permit issued in another county, an annual Ventura County MFF permit is required to operate in Ventura County at a community event. MFF requirements must be met to obtain a permit.

17. I already have a permit for my restaurant in Ventura County. Does that permit me to participate in temporary events?

No. The permit for your restaurant is site-specific and does not transfer to any other location, even right outside your facility. You may, however, display samples of your food outside your restaurant during a temporary event and invite patrons inside to eat.

18. Where can I get the applications, requirements, fees, and training schedule I need to submit to have a community event or operate a temporary food facility?

All the information and forms related to Community Events are posted on the Environmental Health Division website at:

<http://www.ventura.org/rma/envhealth/community-services/consumer-food/special-events.html>