

FACT SHEET #2: SAFE FOOD

BACKGROUND

This fact sheet provides event co-ordinators and vendors with the information they need to reduce risks related to foodborne illnesses at major planned events. It is part of *Public Health Guidelines: Major Planned Events* (See “Resources,” below, for details.)

Foodborne illness is a disease caused by consuming contaminated food. A contaminant (also called a “hazard”) falls into three categories:

- Biological: disease-causing micro-organisms (germs), such as viruses, bacteria, and parasites.
- Chemical: substances such as pesticides and cleaning agents.
- Physical: objects such as glass, metal or bone fragments.

The most common symptoms associated with foodborne illnesses include stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fever. Serious cases of foodborne illnesses can lead to hospitalization or even death, especially for high-risk individuals (e.g., pregnant women, children, the elderly or people with weakened immune systems).

Visit <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthtopics/content.asp?hwid=te4626> for more information on foodborne illness and safe food handling.

Food vendors are regulated under the Food Premises Regulation (*Public Health Act*), and require approvals from the local health authority. Vendors have a legal duty to:

- Ensure they operate in compliance with all legislative requirements.¹
- Ensure foods produced in their facilities are safe for human consumption.

REDUCE THE RISK

Temporary facilities at major events may have less than ideal infrastructures (e.g., refrigeration, cooking equipment, work surfaces, washing/toileting facilities), which can present food safety challenges that vendors must address. In addition, warm weather may contribute to creating food environments that promote bacterial growth and the survival of other harmful organisms in foods.

The health authorities administer the Food Premises Regulation. This regulation outlines the regulatory requirements for businesses supplying and serving food to the public. The health authorities are responsible for approving, licensing and inspecting food facilities and responding to complaints related to foodborne illnesses. Event organizers should ensure food vendors contact their local health authority well in advance of an event to obtain a permit that will authorize them to legally supply food to the public.

¹ Food Premises Regulation, Section 14(1) and the *Food Safety Act* Section 2:
http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/11_210_99

FOOD HANDLING PROCEDURES

Contaminated foods can appear, smell and taste normal. Therefore, it is very important that food be handled in accordance with Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) steps to safeguard against biological, chemical and physical contaminants.

The Food Premises Regulation requires vendors to develop, maintain and follow written food-handling procedures that include all HACCP steps. To learn more, see *Writing Your Own Food Safety Plan – The HACCP Way*:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/EH/FPS/Food/EnsuringFoodSafetyHACCPWay.pdf>.

FOODSAFE

The Food Premises Regulation (section 10) states that operators of a food service establishment must hold a FOODSAFE certificate or its equivalent. When the operator is absent from the establishment, at least one employee present in the establishment must hold a FOODSAFE certificate. FOODSAFE courses are available face to face, online and by correspondence. They are recognized throughout B.C. and across Canada as meeting the requirements for food safety training for food service industry workers. See the FOODSAFE website:

<http://www.foodsafe.ca/>.

MARKETSAFE

If there is a market component to the event, the vendor is encouraged to take the MarketSafe training program. MarketSafe is a food safety training program for farmers and producers who make or grow products to sell at farmers' markets or other types of temporary markets. See: <http://www.foodsafe.ca/marketsafe>.

PROVIDE INFORMATION

- Provide signs that encourage attendees to wash their hands before eating.
- Give attendees information about foodborne illnesses, including the signs and symptoms.
- Encourage attendees to seek first aid/medical attention if experiencing these signs and symptoms.

MONITOR HEALTH RISKS

Health authority representatives should have access to inspect vendors' facilities before and during a major planned event. Event organizers should ensure environmental health officers from the health authority have this access and that vendors are compliant. Organizers should not allow food vendors without a permit to supply food to the public.

CHECKLIST

Each event is unique, with different requirements. Checklist items may not be applicable to your event.

TO DO:

- Contact the local health authority (licensing).
- Check that all food premises/vendors have a:
 - FOODSAFE Certificate
 - Food Safety Plan and Sanitation Plan²

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S HEALTH AUTHORITIES

First Nations Health Authority
<http://www.fnha.ca/>
1-866-913-0033

Island Health
<http://www.viha.ca/>
1-877-370-8699

Provincial Health Services Authority
www.phsa.ca/
604-675-7400

Fraser Health
<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/>
1-877-935-5669

Northern Health
<https://northernhealth.ca/>
250-565-2649

Interior Health
<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/>
250-862-4200

Vancouver Coastal Health
<http://www.vch.ca/>
1-866-884-0888

LEGISLATION

Food Safety Act: http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02028_01

Public Health Act / Food Premises Regulation: http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/11_210_99

Public Health Act / Health Hazards Regulation:
http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/216_2011

RESOURCES

BC Centre for Disease Control. *Ensuring Food Safety: Writing Your Own Food Safety Plan – The HACCP Way*.
<http://www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/1A068D5D-3350-4D1C-A356-D8C6D62B7DB9/0/EnsuringFoodSafetyHACCPWay.pdf>

BC Centre for Disease Control. Food Guidelines and Information.
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/food-your-health/food-safety/food-premises-guidelines>

BC Centre for Disease Control. *Guideline for the Sale of Foods at Temporary Food Markets*.
<http://www.bccdc.ca/resource->

² See: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety/food-safety-sanitation-plans>

[gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/EH/FPS/Food/Guidelines%20-%20Sale%20of%20Foods%20at%20Temporary%20Food%20Markets_current.pdf](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/EH/FPS/Food/Guidelines%20-%20Sale%20of%20Foods%20at%20Temporary%20Food%20Markets_current.pdf)

FOODSAFE. Food Safety Courses.

<http://www.foodsafe.ca/>

Health Authorities

- Fraser Health. Operating a Food Business
<http://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-info/health-topics/food-safety/food-business/>
- Interior Health. Health Approval & Permits: Requirements to operate a food service establishment.
<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/FoodSafety/Pages/Permits.aspx>
- Island Health. Food Safety
<http://www.viha.ca/mho/food/>
- Northern Health. Temporary Food Permits and Markets
<https://northernhealth.ca/YourHealth/EnvironmentalHealth/FoodSafety/TemporaryFoodPermitsandMarkets.aspx>
- Vancouver Coastal Health. Permits: Regulatory requirements to offer food services.
<http://www.vch.ca/your-environment/food-safety/permits/>

HealthLinkBC. Fact Sheets on Foodborne and Waterborne Disease.

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthtopics/content.asp?hwid=te4626>

Province of British Columbia. Food Safety and Security.

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety>

Province of British Columbia. Food Safety Courses.

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety/food-safety-courses>

Province of British Columbia. *Public Health Guidelines: Major Planned Events.*

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/pses-mpes/major-planned-events>

This site also includes the following fact sheets:

- *Fact Sheet #1: Drinking Water*
- *Fact Sheet #2: Safe Food*
- *Fact Sheet #3: Sanitation:*
- *Fact Sheet #4: Solid and Liquid Waste Management*
- *Fact Sheet #5: Harm Reduction*

Public Health Agency. Estimates of Food-borne Illness in Canada.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/efwd-emoha/efbi-emoa-eng.php>