

Health Department Urges Public to Avoid Unlicensed Food Carts

Unsafe Food Practices at Unlicensed Food Carts Pose a Risk of Food Borne Illness

As Portland heads into one of the busiest event weekends of the summer, the Multnomah County Health Department urges the public to purchase food only from licensed food carts and restaurants.

Unlicensed vendors operate without inspections or permits, raising serious public health and safety concerns. County Health Department inspectors cannot verify how food is stored and prepared. These carts lack proper food handling equipment, hand washing facilities, clean water or refrigeration. They also pose a fire risk due to their fuel sources. People who unknowingly consume food from unlicensed vendors can potentially contract food borne illness.

"We're asking people this weekend to support your local



photo of the unlicensed food carts, a food vendor license and a copy of the sticker that gets placed on an unlicensed food cart.

licensed food vendors," said Interim Environmental Health Director Jeff Martin. "That's how we protect our thriving food cart industry and public health in Portland. Our focus is helping small businesses succeed."

Since the summer of 2023, the Health Department has responded to a rise in unlicensed, makeshift red push carts across the city that sell hot dogs near event venues and

bars, often operating on sidewalks or in the middle of closed roads. Many of the vendors of these carts are known to be transported to Portland from other areas.

"We can't have people coming from out of town, disregarding County rules, and selling unsafe food that negatively impacts public health and the livelihoods of licensed food businesses," Martin said.

Since last summer, the Health Department shut down four vans with out-of-state license plates dropping off vendors and their carts near Portland venues. And while six carts have been labeled as unlicensed, vendors have covered the Health Department's "Unlicensed" sticker, misleading customers and continuing to sell food.

The Health Department always takes an education-first approach and has made numerous attempts to engage with these cart operators. Specifically, inspectors have talked to operators about the business permits they are required to have and how to obtain them. The County has provided translated materials and brought in inspectors who speak the primary languages of the vendors. Health jurisdictions in Washington and California have also reported near-identical issues with similar unlicensed hot dog vending operations.

"There is a legal way to operate a mobile hot dog stand: Obtain a temporary license from the Health Department," said Martin. "We've tried working with these unlicensed vendors, but they have been unwilling to follow our guidance, which harms both licensed food vendors and the public."

Licensed mobile food vendors will always have their County-approved health permit displayed. If you do not see one, do not hesitate to ask the vendor.

Health care resources for you

Get help with appointments, getting coverage, mobile showers and more



AUGUST 22

Mobile Showers
12-2 p.m.
247 SE 82nd Ave, Portland

AUGUST 23

IRCO
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
10301 NE Glisan St, Portland

AUGUST 27

Blanchet House
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
310 NW Glisan St, Portland
Family Promise of Tualatin Valley
1-3 p.m.
11460 SW Pacific Hwy, Portland
Union Gospel Mission
2-3 p.m.
3 NW 3rd Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 2

Doreen's Place (for residents only)
9-11 a.m.
610 NW Broadway St, Portland
Mobile Showers
10-11:30 a.m.
4244 SE 91st Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 3

Jean's Place (for residents only)
1:30-3:30 p.m.
18 NE 11th Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 5

Mobile Showers
12-2 p.m.
247 SE 82nd Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 10

Blanchet House
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
310 NW Glisan St, Portland
Union Gospel Mission
2-3 p.m.
3 NW 3rd Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 11

Rosewood Initiative
12-3 p.m.
14127 SE Stark St, Portland

SEPTEMBER 16

Doreen's Place (for residents only)
9-11 a.m.
610 NW Broadway St, Portland

Mobile Showers

10-11:30 a.m.
4244 SE 91st Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 17

P:ear (for youth only)
9-11 a.m.
338 NW 6th Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 19

Mobile Showers
12-2 p.m.
247 SE 82nd Ave, Portland

SEPTEMBER 24

Blanchet House
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
310 NW Glisan St, Portland
Family Promise of Tualatin Valley
1-3 p.m.
11460 SW Pacific Hwy, Portland
Union Gospel Mission
2-3 p.m.
3 NW 3rd Ave, Portland



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