

OVERVIEW OF TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PERMITS – STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

UW EH&S ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH
FALL 2025

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Washington acknowledges the Coast Salish peoples of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations.

www.washington.edu/diversity/tribal-relations/

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Environmental
Public Health
(EPH) Team

Program
Purpose

How EH&S
Works With
RSOs

Quick
Definitions

When a TFE
Permit is
Required

The UW
Permit Process

Review
Resources and
Develop Plan

Online Permit
Application

EH&S Review,
Permit Issued,
Inspection

Tips for
Success

Resources

ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH (EPH) TEAM

The EH&S EPH team:

- reviews food establishment plans
- advises student organizations on food safety
- issues food establishment operating permits
- inspects food establishments for food code compliance



Eleanor Wade, MS, CIH
Assistant Director



Abebe Aberra, MPH, REHS
EPH Program Manager



Meagan Gourley, MET
EPH Specialist



Alexander Silver, BSc
EPH Specialist



Hourly Staff
Program Specialists

PROGRAM PURPOSE

TO ENSURE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY UNIVERSITY FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS.

- > WA State Department of Health (DOH) records about 40-60 foodborne illness outbreaks per year, affecting 400-600 people/year
 - Most foodborne illness goes unreported, especially when mild
 - Illness can result in lost workdays, hospitalization, and death

Caterer without permit linked to Salmonella outbreak

By Coral Beach on August 11, 2016

A rogue caterer who has been operating without proper permits since at least 2012 has been named in a rare move by public health officials in Tacoma, WA. Operating

Food truck implicated in outbreak

By News Desk on September 21, 2023

County officials are reporting an outbreak of gastrointestinal illnesses linked to a food truck in Kirkland, WA.



Carts like these are not permitted by Public Health and food from the vendors could put people at serious risk of illness.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

TO ENSURE PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS AT UW MEET FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

- > Required by the University and state law (WA State Retail Food Code)

WAC 246-215 FOOD SERVICE Subpart B - Temporary Food Establishments	
246-215-09200	Requirements and restrictions.
246-215-09205	Food and equipment protection—Standard operating procedures.
246-215-09210	Time/temperature control for safety food—Temperature control.
246-215-09215	Thawing thickness—Thawing time/temperature control for safety foods.
246-215-09220	Public access—Separation barrier.
246-215-09225	Handwashing and wastewater—Facilities.
246-215-09230	Employee restrooms—Toilet facilities.
246-215-09235	Sink compartment requirements—Warewashing facilities.
246-215-09240	Sink compartment requirements—Food preparation sink.

- > UW EH&S is the designated regulatory authority (“health department”) for UW food establishments

HOW EH&S WORKS WITH RSOS

- > **Various methods to help registered student organizations (RSOs) host safe and successful food events**



Education

Resources, event plan feedback, answer questions



Engagement

Onsite recommendations, limiting menu options, requiring monitoring, equipment or process changes



Review

Ensure regulatory compliance, correct health hazards, hold or discard potentially unsafe food, revoking permits if necessary.

QUICK DEFINITIONS

FOOD ESTABLISHMENT

> Stores, prepares, packages, serves and vends food directly to consumer or otherwise provides food for consumption.

TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT

> Serves food at a fixed location, with a fixed menu:
≤ 21 days in a row for an organized event; **OR**
≤ 3 days/week for recurring event.

TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PERMIT

> Issued by UW EH&S
> May be required for events serving, selling, or giving away food at UW



**When do I need to apply
for a UW EH&S TFE permit?**

WHEN A TFE PERMIT IS REQUIRED

APPLY FOR A TFE PERMIT FROM UW EH&S IF THE EVENT IS HELD AT A UW LOCATION AND *ANY* OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY:

The event is open to the public or UW campus community (students, faculty, staff)

OR

Event information is advertised in public media (e.g., posters, flyers, social media) **or wider campus communications**

OR

The event is run by a non-UW group and UW campus community members are invited to attend.



WHEN A TFE PERMIT IS *NOT* REQUIRED

A TFE PERMIT IS NOT REQUIRED IF THE EVENT IS :

- > **Limited to members of a *small (60 people or fewer), closed campus community group***
 - e.g., RSO meeting, dept. meeting, a lab, a class
 - can include up to 5 non-UW affiliated attendees
- > **Not at a UW location**
 - Check the location for local health dept. permit requirements.
- > **Invitation only and private**
 - Campus community is not invited
 - e.g., wedding, birthday, funeral, non-UW retreat
- > **A potluck**
 - Review definition on the EH&S [TFE webpage](#)



WHEN A TFE PERMIT IS *NOT* REQUIRED

A TFE PERMIT IS NOT REQUIRED IF THE ONLY FOOD OFFERED IS:



Provided by a food establishment with a **current EH&S-issued permanent operating permit** (e.g., UW Dining, Bothell Dining, UW Tacoma Husky Market).



Provided by a vendor with a **WA State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) or United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) license** (e.g., food processing plant license, cottage food operation license).



WHEN A TFE PERMIT IS *NOT* REQUIRED

A TFE PERMIT IS NOT REQUIRED IF THE ONLY FOOD OFFERED IS NON-PERISHABLE, FROM A PERMITTED FOOD ESTABLISHMENT/PROCESSING PLANT AND:



Commercially prepackaged ready-to-eat (e.g., chip bags, bottled beverages, individually packaged baked goods)



Served from original packaging *without hand contact* into clean, single-service items (e.g., glazed doughnuts served from box with tongs)



Individually prepackaged frozen confections (e.g., ice cream cones or popsicles in original packaging)



Whole fruits or vegetables (e.g., bananas, apples, oranges)



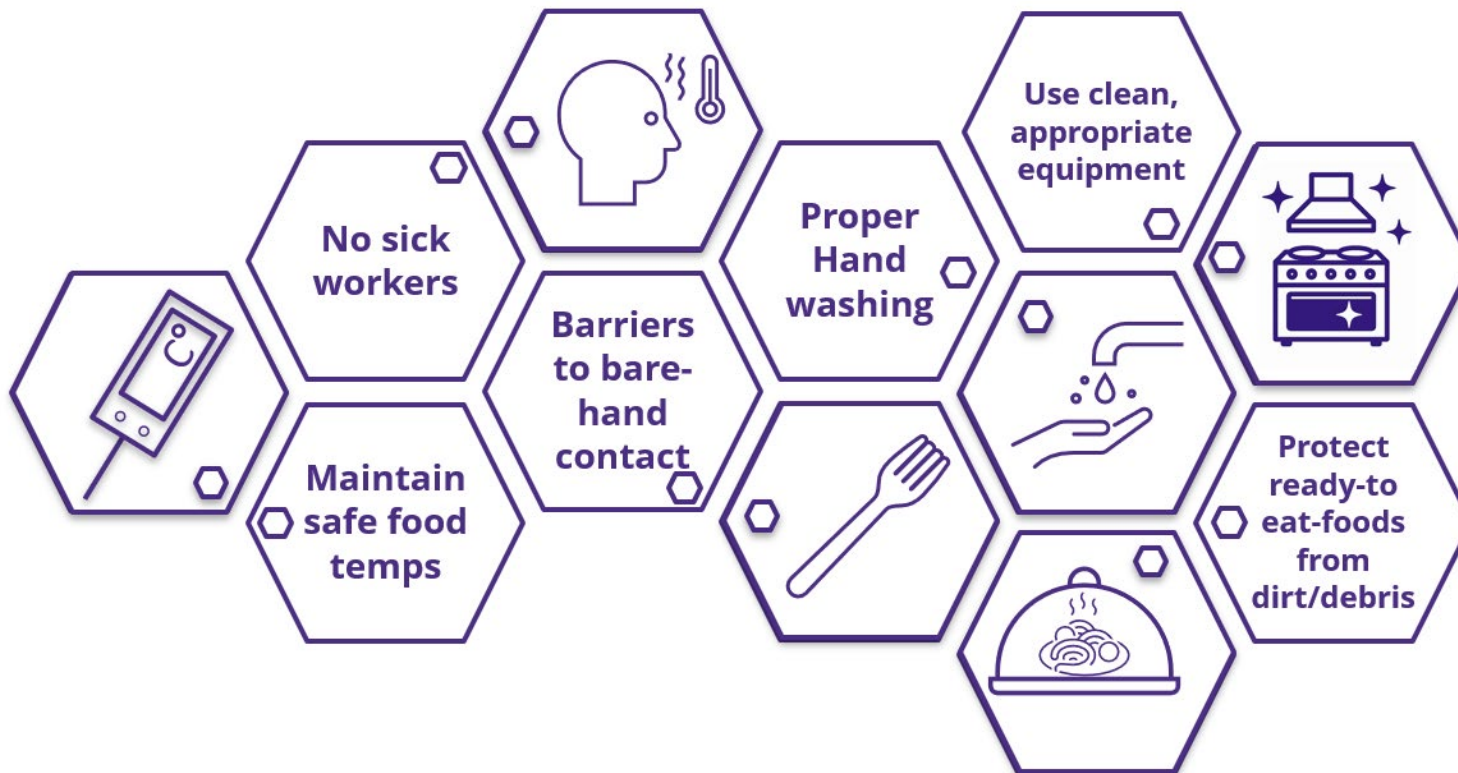
Hot beverages (e.g., tea, coffee) served directly from the container into single use cups without milk or cream



Cotton candy, popcorn, kettle corn made from commercially-packaged ingredients and served *without hand contact*

WHEN A TFE PERMIT IS *NOT* REQUIRED

ALWAYS PRACTICE SAFE FOOD HANDLING, EVEN IF A PERMIT IS NOT REQUIRED.



THE UW PERMIT PROCESS



1) RSO reviews resources & develops plan



2) RSO submits online application to EH&S



3) EH&S reviews the application



4) EH&S approves and issues the TFE permit

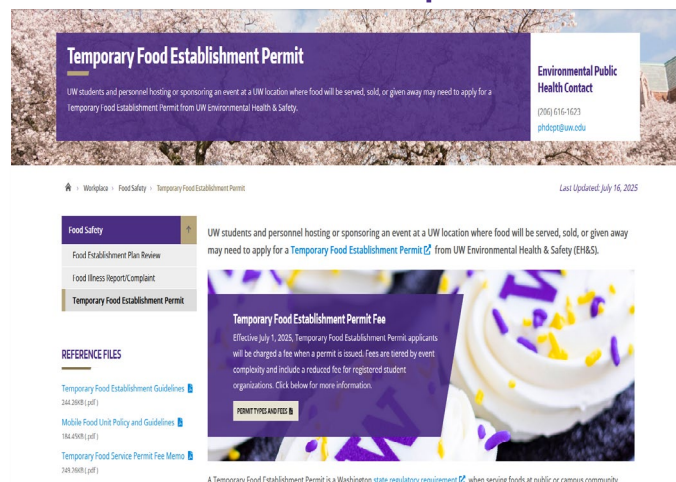


5) EH&S inspects the TFE

REVIEW RESOURCES

Review the EH&S the Temporary Food Establishment Permit Webpage and Food Safety Program Webpage

- Steps to apply for a permit
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Links to reference files related to food code requirements and food establishment permits



REVIEW RESOURCES

FAQs about the application and fees

How do I get a permit?

Do I need a UW NetID to apply?

What do I need before I start a new application?

What does EH&S do during the application review process?

Why could an application be denied?

What can I do if my application is denied?

What is the cost of the permit if my application is approved?

How do I pay the permit fee?

Will I be charged a fee if my application is denied or not processed?

Is the permit fee refundable if my event is canceled?

How often can a permitted temporary food establishment operate?

FAQs about food safety

When would EH&S be required to close a temporary food establishment?

What are best practices for a potluck?

Can University personnel serve home-prepared food at a UW location?

Are foods required to be cooled at an approved and permitted kitchen?

Do event organizers need a food worker card?

FAQs about food vendors

What kind of permit do food vendors need to have?

I have a food establishment business license. Can I serve food at a UW event?

Does EH&S provide a list of approved food vendors?

Did you know? Most permit questions EH&S receives can be answered by one of our FAQs!

REVIEW RESOURCES

Review the Temporary Food Establishment Guidelines

- Choose type of TFE at event
- Identify key safety aspects to include in your event plan
- Understand event organizer responsibilities

TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT GUIDELINES

Event organizers refer to these guidelines before [applying for a Temporary Food Establishment Permit](#) to:

- Determine the type of temporary food establishment you intend to operate at your event; **and**
- Ensure you have trained food workers, appropriate food sources, facilities and equipment to support safe food preparation, handling, and transport; **and**
- Understand when you or UW Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) may be required to stop operations at your food establishment.

After a permit is issued, event organizers follow these guidelines to support a safe and successful food event.

SCOPE

These guidelines include Washington State Retail Food Code requirements (view [Regulations and Policies](#)) and best practices for safety. These guidelines apply to all permitted temporary food establishments (TFEs) at University locations.

RESPONSIBILITIES

When event organizers apply for a Temporary Food Establishment Permit, they agree to meet the requirements in the Temporary Food Establishment Guidelines, which are designed to ensure food is prepared and handled safely and under sanitary conditions.

The person(s) in charge of the temporary food establishment (e.g., external vendors, caterers, mobile food units) may be designated by the event organizer to fulfill some of these requirements.

Temporary food establishments are required to stop operations and inform EH&S immediately if any of the following situations arise, which could introduce imminent health hazards:

- Foodborne illness outbreak
- Fire
- Flood
- Loss of electricity
- Lack of hot water or loss of water service
- Sewage backup
- Misuse of toxic or poisonous materials
- Any other circumstance that may endanger public health

Single event permit

A single event permit allows a temporary food establishment to operate up to 21 consecutive days in conjunction with a single event; or up to three days per week in conjunction with a recurring event. The permit identifies your food establishment's approved service dates and times.

Multiple event permit

A multiple event permit allows an event with the **same food source, menu, location and service period** to occur up to five times in a calendar year. When applying for this permit type, include all service dates in one application. The permit identifies your food establishment's approved service dates and times.

TYPES OF TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

When event organizers apply for a Temporary Food Establishment Permit, they select one of the following types (described below):

- [External Caterer](#)
- [On-site Food Preparation](#)
- [External Mobile Food Unit](#)

EXTERNAL CATERER

An external caterer involves event foods that are *all of the following*:

- Provided by a restaurant, caterer, or food vendor with a current permanent operating permit issued by a [Washington state local health jurisdiction \(LHLJ\)](#) or [Washington State Department of Agriculture \(WSDA\)](#); **and**
- Not prepared on site; food is fully prepared at the off-site permitted commissary/food establishment (e.g., boxed lunch kits, prepared buffet trays); **and**
- Delivered to the UW by the food provider or a UW individual with a [current Washington state food worker card](#); food is served upon arrival at the event; **and**
- Served buffet-style, plated, or table service by the food provider or UW individuals with food worker cards.



TYPE OF FOOD ESTABLISHMENT

The permit application will ask different questions depending on temporary food establishment type:

EXTERNAL CATERER

- Foods are fully prepared at off-site permitted commissary/food establishment
- Delivered and served onsite



ONSITE FOOD PREPARATION

- Event foods are sourced from a permanent food establishment
- Further prepared on site prior to being served



MOBILE FOOD UNIT

- Event foods are prepared in the off-site commissary kitchen
- Stored, prepared, and served by food workers from a permitted mobile food unit



DEVELOP PLAN

RSO develops the food event plan

Service Hours

> The time between food served to food composted/discarded?

Menu

> All event food items. Recipes? Ingredients?

Service Plan

> Delivery or pick-up? Buffet self-service or plated foods? Caterer onsite?

Food Worker Cards

> Will RSO members be transporting foods or handling foods or food contact surfaces?

Floor Plan

> Indoor/outdoor?
> What facilities do you need access to?

Equipment

> Equipment to prepare and serve foods at safe temperatures?

Food Flow

> Steps from receiving ingredients to serving food

DEVELOP PLAN

Gather all required information before starting the online application using the downloadable application form

 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

About / Emergencies / Report / Training / Waste 

BIOLOGICAL > CHEMICAL > ENVIRONMENTAL > FIRE & LIFE > RADIATION > RESEARCH & LAB > WORKPLACE >

TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PERMIT APPLICATION FORM

DOWNLOAD 578.51KB (.DOCX) >

UW students and personnel hosting or sponsoring an event at a UW location where food will be served, sold, or given away may need to apply for a Temporary Food Establishment Permit from UW Environmental Health & Safety.

Download the Temporary Food Establishment Permit Application Form and use it to collect information needed to complete the online application prior to the deadline.

Visit the [Temporary Food Establishment Permit webpage](#) for more information.

Category

Environmental Health Health

Contact

Environmental Public Health Contact

(206) 616-1623
phdept@uw.edu
Last Updated July 18, 2025

ONLINE PERMIT APPLICATION

W ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PERMIT

Home Frequently Asked Questions My Applications

Welcome Alex Silver Sign Out

Applicant Information

Applicant Name*:

Phone Number*:

Extension:

Organization*:

Box Number*:

Event Information

Event Name*:

Location/Building*:

Room:

This is a Registered Student Organization (RSO) Event*: ☒ Yes ☐ No

RSO Name*:

Student Activities Advisor Name*:

Student Activities Advisor Email*:

Number of Attendees*:

Setting*:

Food Service Dates/Periods

Delete Date

Date*:

Delete Period

+ Add Date

Start Time*:

End Time*:

+ Add Period

Food Disposition Confirmation

As event coordinator, I confirm that leftover perishable and/or unpackaged foods will be composted at the end of the approved food service period and not saved for later consumption (e.g., no boxing up leftovers):

**This does not apply to refrigerated and frozen foods stored in mobile food units, unopened perishable foods that have been temperature controlled during the event, or commercial shelf-stable foods in resalable packaging (e.g., frying oil, spices, seasonings).*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Event Food Establishment Type

☐ **External Caterer:** Food vendors, restaurants, and caterers with a current permanent operating permit issued by a Washington state local health jurisdiction or Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). All menu items are prepared at the permitted commissary/restaurant. Prepared foods are delivered to the event by the caterer or a UW individual with a current Washington state food worker card. No on-site food preparation.

☐ **On-site Food Preparation:** UW unit or RSO members with current Washington state food worker cards prepare event foods in an EH&S permitted kitchen on campus and serve it at the event, use grills/BBQs to prepare and serve food at the event, and/or do preparation and service of foods from a covered booth at the event. External vendors or restaurants with a current permanent operating permit issued by a local health jurisdiction or Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) prepare and serve food at the event using commercial equipment in a covered food booth.

☐ **External Mobile Food Unit:** Menu items prepared and served from a mobile food unit (i.e., food truck, food trailer, or self-contained moveable cart), with a current mobile food unit operating permit from a Washington state local health jurisdiction.

Previous

Save Progress And Close

Next

Food establishment type determines information requested on the next page of the application.

ONLINE PERMIT APPLICATION

STATUS	DESCRIPTION
Not Submitted	Application can be edited or deleted; not yet sent to EH&S yet.
Submitted	Application sent to EH&S for review; can be edited but not deleted.
In Review	EH&S is reviewing; may ask questions via chat feature
Action Required By Applicant	Applicant must edit the application or add information . EH&S cannot complete review until this action is taken.
Approved	Application approved; TFE permit is issued . Application is viewable.
Denied	Application denied; EH&S will provide the reason in email.

My Applications

Show 10 applications per page

Actions	ID	Event Name	Status	Event Dates	Application Date	Processed Date
Continue Delete	12659	Food Permit celebration	Not Submitted	09/01/2025	Not Submitted	—
Edit Payment	12658	Party time	Submitted	09/01/2025	08/21/2025	—
View Payment	12648	Test 5 - Worktag Set	Approved	08/29/2025	08/15/2025	08/15/2025



ONLINE PERMIT APPLICATION

Event ID 91: Summer Cookout

08/07/2025

The screenshot displays a chat interface for an online permit application. At the top, it shows 'Event ID 91: Summer Cookout' and the date '08/07/2025'. The chat history includes two 'Application Submitted' messages from the system, each stating that the application for a Temporary Food Establishment Permit has been submitted and needs review. A message from 'alex47' (labeled 'Action Required by Applicant') informs the user of required edits: final cook temperature, sanitizer type, and food worker card. A final message from 'You' (labeled 'You') shows the user's response, resubmitting the application with updates and asking a question about bleach sanitization. At the bottom, there is a text input field with the placeholder 'Type your message...' and a blue 'Send' button.

Application Submitted
The application for the Temporary Food Establishment Permit has been submitted. Please allow time for the Environmental Public Health Specialist to review the application.
System Jul 14, 2025 16:38

Action Required by Applicant
Hello applicant, I am passing this application back to make the following edits:

- Your application states that burgers will be cooked to 135F on the grill. Raw ground beef should be cooked to at least 158F, please edit your final cook temperature.
- You indicated that you will use Purell Hand Sanitizer to sanitize food contact surfaces. This is not an acceptable sanitizer for food contact surfaces. Please refer to the EH&S Sanitizing Food Contact Surfaces Poster on our website for additional guidance.
- Please attach a food worker card for the person who will be preparing the burgers.

Please let me know if you have any questions. You can edit your application through the 'my applications' page. Thank you!
alex47 Aug 04, 2025 13:47

Application Submitted
The application for the Temporary Food Establishment Permit has been submitted. Please allow time for the Environmental Public Health Specialist to review the application.
System Aug 04, 2025 13:50

Hello, I resubmitted with an updated raw beef cooking temperature and my food worker card. I also indicated that we will use bleach and chlorine test strips to sanitize our dishware before use. Does any type of bleach work to sanitize food contact surfaces?
You Aug 04, 2025 13:51

Type your message... Send

**Action Required
By Applicant**
means your
application
requires edits

**Use the chat
feature to ask
EH&S clarifying
questions about
your application**

EH&S REVIEW



EH&S reviews the food source against risk-based screening criteria, including:

Current operating permit from a regulatory authority

- > EH&S, a WA state local health jurisdiction, or Washington State Department of Agriculture

At least one routine inspection by the local health jurisdiction

Most recent routine inspection from the local health jurisdiction

- > Scores $\leq$ 45 violation points
- > No bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food
- > No repeated red critical violations

No health-based closures in the last two years

EH&S also reviews the **food event plan** and will request changes if any questions or concerns.

PERMIT ISSUED (FEES)

- > **EH&S will categorize your TFE application by risk level: *minimal, moderate, complex***
 - Risk level does not impact permit fee for RSOs
- > **RSO permit fee : \$51.00 for a single event**
 - Events with multiple food sources will need multiple permits
- > **Rush fees: applications submitted after the deadline**
 - **3-5 days** before event: \$42 rush fee added to permit fee, if approved
 - **1-2 days** before event: \$84 rush fee added to permit fee, if approved
- > **Credit Card, Debit Card, Electronic Check Surcharge**
 - 15.6% University administrative surcharge added to the total cost

PERMIT ISSUED (FEES)

- > Confirm with your student activities advisor how your RSO should pay for the permit fee
- > *The approach may vary for RSOs on different UW campuses*

Application Submitted

You've submitted your Temporary Food Establishment Permit Application for **Party time Aug 27 on 09/01/2025**.

Please click the button below identifying how you will arrange for payment.

The **permit fee** will not be billed until after the permit is issued.

Once you choose a payment method it cannot be changed. Please read all the options before clicking a payment button.

Worktag Payment

You will use a UW worktag to pay for this expense. The worktag can be provided to you by your unit's financial contact.

Enter your UW worktag

Credit Card, Debit Card, Electronic Check Payment

You will use a credit card, debit card, or electronic check to pay for this expense. **A University administrative surcharge of 15.6% will be added to the total cost.**

Note: **Procards cannot be used for payment due to [University policy](#)**

Pay with Card or Check

Tacoma Temporary Food Establishment

You are selecting the UW Tacoma worktag to pay for this expense.

Pay with UWT central worktag



PERMIT ISSUED

W	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY
	UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PERMIT	
RISK LEVEL: None	
PERMIT TYPE: On-site Food Preparation	
Permit Number:	12636
Event Name:	Spring Barbeque
Applicant Name:	TFE Permit Applicant
Organization:	RSO Club Name
Location:	Sylvan Grove
Service Periods:	05/15/2026 05:00 PM - 07:00 PM
08/01/2025 Issued On	<i>Katia J. Harb</i> Katia J. Harb Senior Director, UW Environmental Health & Safety
This permit is issued by authority of the Director, Environmental Health & Safety. It applies to this establishment only and is not transferrable. All food storage, processing, transportation and service must be done in compliance with Washington State Board of Health rules and regulations as found in WAC 246-215 and WAC-246-217. Noncompliance with these requirements could result in permit suspension and establishment closure.	
PERMIT MUST BE POSTED IN A CONSPICUOUS LOCATION	

- > **Print and post the permit** visibly at the TFE
- > Adhere to the TFE **approved location, date and service periods**
- > Only offer **menu items and the event plan approved** under the permit

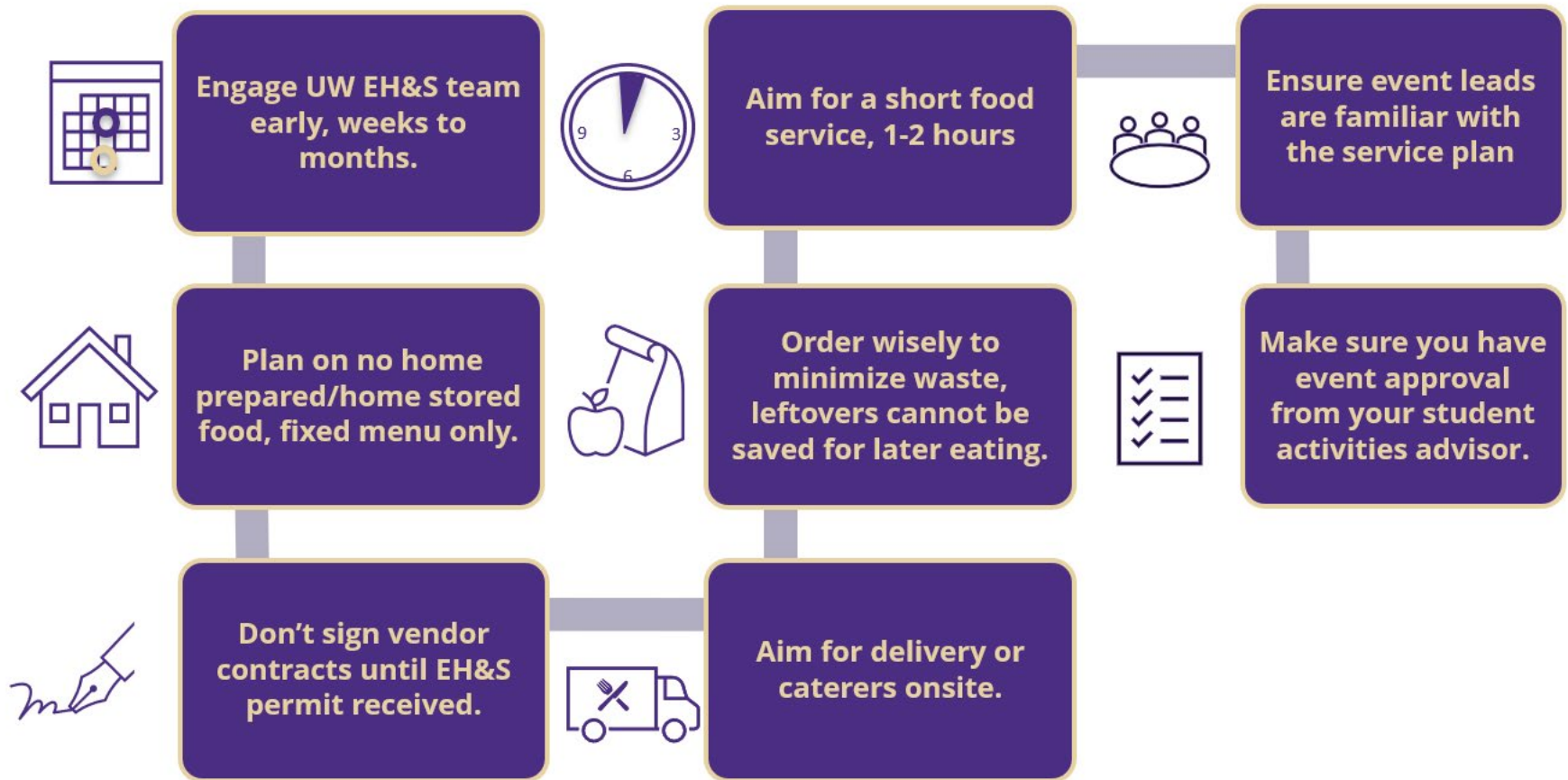
© 2006 The Authors
Journal compilation © 2006 Blackwell Publishing Ltd

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

- > Reviewing **critical (red)** and **lower risk (blue)** WA State food code requirements
- > Offering RSOs **on-site guidance and corrections** for a safe event
- > Reviewing and **sharing the inspection report** with the RSO food event organizer

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

BEFORE YOUR EVENT



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

DURING YOUR EVENT



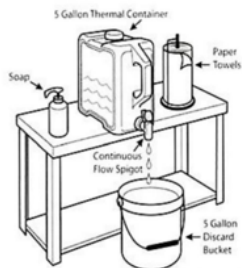
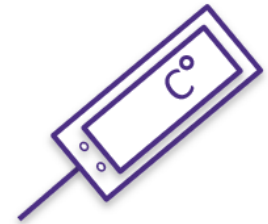
**Assign food leads,
maintain control.**

**Protect food and
prevent bare
hand contact.**



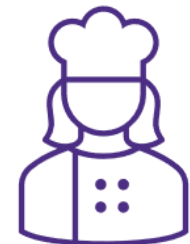
**Feeling unwell?
Avoid handling
food.**

**Ensure
temperature
control at every
step.**



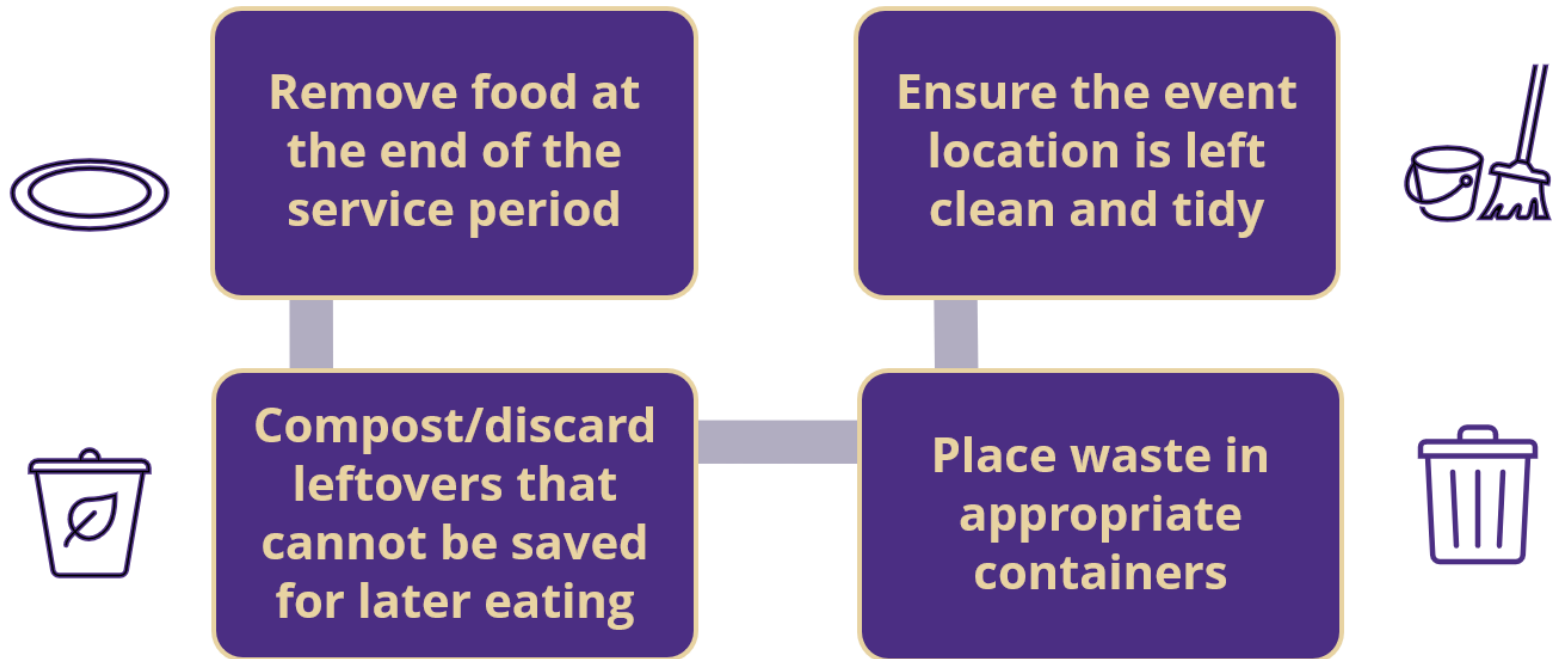
**Unpackaged food
= handwashing
and WA state
FWCs.**

**Wear safe attire if
preparing or
serving food.**



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

AFTER YOUR EVENT



RESOURCES

UW EH&S Temporary Food Establishment Webpage

<https://ehs.washington.edu/workplace/food-safety-program/temporary-food-service-permit>

UW EH&S Food Safety Program Webpage

<https://ehs.washington.edu/workplace/food-safety-program>

WA DOH Food Worker Manual

<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/food/food-worker-and-industry/food-worker-manual>

Contact EH&S EPH team at phdept@uw.edu