

Getting Health Dept. Approvals

Check with your Local Health Dept.

They will tell you about local codes to which you and your new cart must conform. Obtain a printed copy of these health codes for future reference.

Take with you the schematics and details of your hot dog cart (print these off from our site). They may want to know the technical specifications such as materials of construction, equipment installed, water capacity, and other features to compare with their codes and regulations.

Be professional, friendly, polite and patient. Take notes. Ask questions if you do not fully understand any points. It is easier and less costly to ask questions first than to pay fines later.

Many hot dog vendors step around local health codes by making a deal with a nearby commissary. A commissary is a restaurant or deli that will provide you with food preparation and storage services. By getting them to set aside some storage area for your food and prepare some of the condiments, you avoid the hassle and worry of having to meet many difficult regulations! In some areas the local laws require that a hot dog cart operator must work from a commissary.

See the section of this site Health Department Links for a list of helpful links to various Health Department web sites in the U.S. and Canada. These often have good detailed information for food service businesses. We have included clues and directions to get you to the places you need to go.

You can also go to your local city web site and your county health department web site and search for information. Look for headings or search for info using the terms food handling, food protection, food manager certification, food service certification, mobile vendor, hot dog vendor, permits, and licenses.

Often these local city governments offer short training courses on starting a small business in their city and food handling certification courses. These courses usually take between 6 and 15 hours and generally cost between \$100 and \$400. Often city business permits can be procured on-line. A food handling course varies in length from 1-3 days.

See the section Health Guidelines for a plain language comprehensive guidebook on how to run a hotdog cart within the parameters required by most health departments in North America.

Customers in California must now conform to the new California Retail Food Code which came into effect in July of 2007. The new Cal Code is the most comprehensive set of health department legislation affecting mobile food vendors in the United States. To help our customers meet these new regulations, we have set up a special web site to deal exclusively with hot dog carts in California. Please see our new site California Hot Dog Carts .