

**Baltimore County Maryland  
Department of Health  
Division of Environmental Health Services**

**Food Service Facility Fact Sheet**

1. **What is a “food service facility”?**

A “food service facility” is any place or operation where food or drink is prepared, sold, served or distributed, for free or for a charge, on the premises or elsewhere. A “food service facility” does NOT include:

- A facility that offers only prepackaged foods that are not **potentially hazardous**;
- A kitchen in a private home where food is prepared at no charge either for guests at a social gathering that is not a “public event” **or** for service to unemployed, homeless or other disadvantaged populations;
- A food preparation or serving area, where only non-potentially hazardous food is prepared or served by an “excluded organization;”
- A hotel, lodging or rooming home that serves only a continental breakfast; and
- A farmer’s market offering or selling to the public raw agricultural products, eggs, and other food products approved by the approving authority.

2. **What is the meaning of “potentially hazardous food”?**

“Potentially hazardous food” means a food that is natural or synthetic and requires time/temperature control for safety, because it is in a form capable of supporting rapid and progressive growth of infectious or toxigenic microorganisms.

3. **When is a food permit/license required?**

Any person that proposes to operate a business that meets the definition of a “food service facility” must contact the Baltimore County Department of Health, Division of Environmental Health Services (EHS) to ascertain the steps necessary to open and operate their unique business. EHS contact information is 410-887-FOOD (3663) or [EHS@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:EHS@baltimorecountymd.gov).

4. **How is a “food service facility” classified?**

A food service facility is classified through a process called “priority assessment,” which evaluates a facility based on the potential risk for the occurrence of foodborne illnesses in any foods prepared, sold, served or distributed.

5. **What are the three “priority assessment” classifications?**

The three priority assessment classifications and the associated meanings are:

- A “**high priority facility**” is a facility that:
  - Is a health care facility; **or**
  - Serves potentially hazardous food that is prepared:
    - (a) a day or more in advance of service, **or**
    - (b) using food preparation methods that require the food to pass through the temperature range of 41°F to 135°F two or more times before service, such as cooking, cooling, and reheating.

- A “**moderate priority facility**” is a facility that serves potentially hazardous food:
  - That is prepared using methods that require the food to pass through the temperature range of 41°F to 135°F not more than one time before service, such as cooking, hot holding, and serving; **or**
  - That is cut, assembled, or packaged on the premises, such as meats.
- A “**low priority facility**” is a facility that serves:
  - Commercially packaged potentially hazardous foods directly to consumer; **or**
  - Hand dipped ice cream; **or**
  - Pre-cooked, ready to eat, commercially produced skinned hot dog or similar type sausage products as stated in Baltimore County regulations; **or**
  - Non-potentially hazardous food that is cut, assembled, or packaged on the premises, such as candy, popcorn, and baked goods.

6. **When does an “excluded organization” require a food permit/license?**

An “excluded organization” is a volunteer fire company **or** a bonafied non-profit fraternal, civic, war veteran’s, religious or charitable organization.

A food permit/license is required when an excluded organization has a “public event.”

7. **What is a “Public Event”?**

A “Public Event” means an event that is:

- Open to the general public whether or not a fee is charged; **or**
- Advertised with fliers, banners, newspaper articles, radio or television announcements, or on an Internet website as being open to the public.

9. **When is an “excluded organization” not required to get a food permit/license?**

A food permit/license is not required when an excluded organization has:

- A private party; **or**
- An event restricted to organization members; **or**
- Another event that restricts the general public from attending.

**Baltimore County**  
**Department of Health**  
**Eastern Family Resource Center**  
**9100 Franklin Square Center, Suite 230**  
**Baltimore, Maryland 21237**  
**410-887-FOOD (3663)**  
**Fax: 410-887-3392**  
 Email: [EHS@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:EHS@baltimorecountymd.gov)