



Health Department

Environmental Health Services Division Environmental Public Health Program

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Public Health

Free Hot Soup Illegal Operation FAQs

Is the Health Department only concerned with permit fees?

The Kansas City Missouri Health Department believes everyone, including those experiencing homelessness, deserve the reassurance of food safety practices, which is why we have partnered with 43 groups and organizations to obtain the required permit to safely serve food to those in need. This is not about money. The Department offers free permit fees, free training, and free food handler cards for charitable groups serving the homeless population.

Was Free Hot Soup notified of the required health permits to serve food to the public?

They were. A representative from Free Hot Soup was present as the North Blue Ridge Neighborhood Association meeting on September 4, 2018 where notification was provided for the requirements for health permits. Furthermore, Free Hot Soup was already ordered to cease operation in April of this year, by the Cass County Health Department for serving food to the public without the proper permitting at a motel in the City Belton, Mo. Both Health Department food laws are based on federal regulations set forth by the Food & Drug Administration. Here is the media report covering the closure in Belton clearly illustrating poor food handling practices (at 37 seconds into video) and knowledge of required permitting. <https://youtu.be/tJxFiFQ82uY>

Even after all of this, the knowledge of the law is irrelevant, as some representatives from Free Hot Soup have publicly stated they are still intending to operate without a Health Permit.

What laws/ordinances were broken?

The Kansas City Missouri Food Code (Sec. 30-71, 8-301.11) states “A *PERSON* may not operate a *FOOD ESTABLISHMENT* without a valid *PERMIT* to operate issued by the *REGULATORY AUTHORITY*. A *PERMIT* is required to apply for and obtain and pay for a separate *FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PERMIT* for each of the types of *FOOD ESTABLISHMENT* operations listed in subsections (1) through (12)”.

Although laws were broken by Free Hot Soup, the Health Department did not issue a citation or a summons to appear in court. No one was cited, but warnings were given. Future incidents may result in citations and court appearances.

Free Hot Soup isn't operating a Food Establishment, so why do they need a permit?

The Kansas City Missouri Food Code (Sec. 30-71) states a Food Establishment can be many things, such as: (i) *Such as a restaurant; central preparation facility; catered feeding location; catering operation if the operation provides food directly to a consumer or to a conveyance used to transport people; market; vending (location) operation, if the operation provides potentially hazardous foods; conveyance used to transport people; institution; or food bank.*

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Like similar organizations and groups, Free Hot Soup is considered a food establishment and requires a permit.

Why was bleach poured on the food?

The food was denatured with bleach at one of the four illegal investigation locations because the onsite person in charge threatened to remove the food from the trash and reserve it to the public. This is a practice used by the Department and public health jurisdictions throughout the country when there is a direct threat to the public health by potentially contaminated food.

Why were no food temperatures taken at the time of the investigation(s)?

The fact the food was not prepared in a permitted kitchen was the Health Department's primary focus during the onsite investigation. The Health Department was unable to determine the sanitary conditions of location in which the food was prepared, food safety knowledge of those preparing the food, and the cooking, storing, and transportation temperatures of the food prior to the arrival of the service location.

Due to these factors, the food was considered to be unsafe for human consumption.

Why is the Health Department targeting Free Hot Soup?

Free Hot Soup was not targeted. The Department received multiple complaints on Free Hot Soup serving throughout the City. As with every complaint received, the Health Department has a responsibility to respond in order to protect and preserve public health of all Kansas City residents and visitors.

Do I need a health permit for my family picnic?

No. Family picnics are not regulated by the Health Department.

Free Hot Soup claimed their operation was a "family picnic", so they don't need a health permit.

Not true. Free Hot Soup was advertising on social media platforms and in public meetings that they are open to the general public and everyone is welcome to join. This is just like any temporary food service event or food establishment within the City and requires a health permit.

How can I help in feeding the homeless?

The Health Department encourages all individuals who care about helping those in need to support and partner with our local permitted groups and organizations that are ensuring food safety standards are met.

Since the investigation of the illegal food service operation of Free Hot Soup, the Department has received many requests from many charitable organizations seeking the required permits to serve the public. The Kansas City Health Department believes everyone, including those experiencing homelessness, deserve the reassurance of food safety practices. As aforementioned, the Department has successfully worked with 43 groups and organizations to obtain the required permit to safely serve food to those in need.